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BENJAMIN EALOVEGA

They were the hottest tickets in town: Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic in residence in London, presenting six concerts featuring music by Sibelius, Mahler and German modernist Helmut Lachenmann during one week in February. Seats had reportedly sold out a year in advance, critics and broadcasters were poised for action, and – this being Rattle's final stretch at the helm of the great German orchestra before he leaves to join the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO) in September 2017 – interviews with the maestro were restricted to precise 30-minute telephone slots.

Seated a few rows back at the second Sibelius concert at the Barbican Centre, waiting for Leonidas Kavakos to begin the opening theme of the Violin Concerto, I found my thoughts being turned by the shimmering, floating bed of barely-there strings to the orchestra's famous string section sound – the mysteries and history of which are the subject of Philip Clark's cover story (page 32). He talks to Rattle about how the section's sonic world has changed over the course of the orchestra's long life, or at least since the advent of recording has allowed observers to track its evolution. What emerges is a story that melds the visions of the orchestra's conductors with the history of a city, and the seismic world events that shaped the 20th century.

It is also a story of tradition, and the part the musicians have played in determining the sound of their own section and by extension the orchestra through their response to that tradition. The Berlin Philharmonic's history is one of its greatest calling cards, yet an orchestra is not a museum piece and nor are its players – shifting demographics and the tides of change have their inevitable impact on any ensemble's sound and direction. By placing adventure, increased democratisation and education at the heart of his tenure with the Berliners, Rattle has pioneered a more socially aware outlook that is being adopted by orchestras across Germany (see news, page 12). Britain's LSO has well-established and award-winning community and education programmes under its name; Rattle's appointment as music director can only give such forward-looking endeavours a profile-raising shot in the arm.

Chloe Cutts magazine editor
Email me at **thestrad@thestrad.com** or tweet **@TheStradMag**



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— see page 106

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Cover photo Monika Rittershaus

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Contributors



SARAH CHANG
(Practice Diary, page 22)
made her debut performance as a solo violinist with the New York Philharmonic when she was eight and has since played with orchestras worldwide. She has been recording exclusively for EMI Classics for more than 20 years.



STEWART POLLENS
(Opinion, page 29)
served as conservator of musical instruments at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art from 1976–2006. His *Manual of Musical Instrument Conservation* will be released by Cambridge University Press in 2015.



NATHANIEL VALLOIS
(Books, page 107)
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PHILIP CLARK
(Berlin Philharmonic, page 32)
is a composer-turned-improviser who is a regular writer for *The Wire*, *Gramophone*, *Limelight*, the *Guardian* and the *Financial Times*. He is currently writing a book on jazz pianist Dave Brubeck.



RAYMOND SCHRYER
(Trade Secrets, page 67)
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the Strad

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The Strad magazine @TheStradMag The Strad

ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES advertising@thestrad.com Tel +44 20 7618 3474 UK DISTRIBUTION **Seymour** Tel +44 20 7429 4000
US DISTRIBUTION **Ingram Periodicals Inc** Tel +1 800 627 6247 **RetailVision** Tel +1 800 381 1288 **Source Interlink** Tel +1 239 949 4450

Printed in Great Britain by Buxton Press Limited
We consider articles and letters submitted for publication but regret we cannot acknowledge or return unsolicited material
Published monthly ISSN 0039-2049

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The Strad is published by Newsquest Specialist Media Ltd, part of Newsquest Media Group — a Gannett company.
Registered office: Newsquest Media Group, Loudwater Mill, Station Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, HP10 9TY

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The Chaplin Trio pictured in the December 1901 issue of *The Strad*

LETTER *of the* MONTH

THE CHAPLIN SISTERS

I am researching the sisters Nellie, Kate and Mabel Chaplin, who performed as the Chaplin Trio in the early 20th century. Currently, I am trying to find out more information about cellist Mabel, who was born in 1870.

The last reference I've been able to find of her playing was in the hugely successful revival of *The Beggar's Opera* in 1922. Along with her sisters, she performed in a small authentic-instrument band consisting of ladies only. The production ran for 1,463 consecutive performances at the Lyric Theatre in Hammersmith, London.

The next thing that I found was that her 1717 Barak Norman bass viol was sold to Hill's in 1961, ending up at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, in 1965. If she was still alive at that time, this suggests that the viol was not played in public for almost 40 years. So far I have been unable to establish why she stopped playing (assuming that she did stop) or when she died.

If anyone has any information, or could suggest where else I could try, I would be very grateful if they could contact me at semibrevity@gmail.com

PAUL THWAITES
Amsterdam, the Netherlands



LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS

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SILENCE IS GOLDEN

Toby Deller is right to defend the violinist Kyung Wha Chung, who reacted when provoked by a noisy audience ('The Art of Silence', Opinion, February 2015). Performances in London are increasingly witnessing explosions of noise between movements as concertgoers seemingly indulge in a mass pre-emptive attempt to expel non-existent phlegm. Even worse is the growing tendency for members of the audience to talk not only between movements but during the performance itself, which is disrespectful to the musicians and distracting for everyone else. We need more reminders that the convention of listening in silence is there for a reason.

RIA HOPKINSON
London, UK

IN THE CLEAR

As a long-time subscriber to *The Strad*, I was not altogether pleased with what I considered a somewhat crammed layout and tight typeface. This often made for difficult reading. How delighted I was with the new version, which debuted in January of this year. *The Strad* now speaks to me as a really high-class, professional magazine, with a clear and pleasing layout and a well-spaced typeface that benefits ease of reading. I can only say 'bravo' for a well-done, superb editorial job.

KARL H. GRUETTEMANN
Berkeley Heights, NJ, US

THANKS FOR THE MEMORY

Regarding violinist Nona Liddell's online recollections of working with Benjamin Britten (bit.ly/1z6Zz9U), specifically with the English Chamber Orchestra (ECO) at Snape Maltings, I have a slightly different recollection of the same events and I believe she may have conflated more than one occasion.

This event did indeed occur at Snape Maltings, not on the occasion when Rostropovich arrived late and a tad the worse for wear, but at the very first rehearsal of *The Building of the House*, a piece written by Ben for the opening concert of the Maltings, which was to take place in the presence of the Queen. Ben was certainly 'edgy' as Ms Liddell says. I imagine it was because he was about to hear 'in the flesh' what had previously been only in his head. The cellist Peter Willison came in late – I remember him well because he never wore shoes while playing concerts, just black dress socks. It was an uncomfortable moment as he crept between his fellow string players and took his seat, all the while deliberately (as it seemed to me) avoiding looking at Ben. As he lifted his bow to play, Ben shouted, 'And your mute!'

We then had the first run-through of the piece. Straight afterwards, BB left his rostrum and went over to Peter, smiled, shook him warmly by the hand and (perhaps, I don't know) apologised. I remember this very well because I was in the chorus singing both at that rehearsal and the subsequent concert.

A couple of years ago I had occasion to recall this story with Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, another cellist in the ECO at that time, and how we both laughed at the memory! I suppose enough time had passed for us to delight in a little *Schadenfreude* – and it is, after all, a wonderful anecdote. If anyone is in doubt about my recollection, ask Willison himself, who now runs the Sinfonia of London – I'm quite sure he will remember it well!

STEPHEN LLEWELLYN
Ipswich, UK

POSTERS OF THE PAST

I am frequently disappointed when I look for posters from *The Strad*'s past issues. I notice that the same posters are re-advertised in the magazine time and again and I have to resort to eBay, and even to begging on online discussion forums, to find the posters I want. Are there plans to revisit any of the posters from days gone by?

JOEP BRONKHORST
Nyköping, Sweden

The Strad's posters are frequently reprinted. Turn to page 28 for details of the latest reprints available at The Strad Shop.

ONLINE COMMENT

Readers air their views on a study of old Italian instruments (see Opinion, page 29) that suggests their unique sound came from small errors in the copying process: bit.ly/1CgJvj8

FELIX ROTARU This sounds pretty arrogant. We underestimate the intelligence of our ancestors, just because they were more or less peasants. 'Don't confuse stupidity with poverty' – old proverb.

DMITRY BADIAROV All violinists are a result of their mistakes in their copying of Heifetz or Menuhin or their teacher; painters are a result of mistakes in their copying of Pollack, Miró or whoever. These researchers are genuinely original – not copying anyone.

CHRIS SWANSON Aren't all things formed by evolutionary change due to imperfect copying and the realisation that the copy is better than the original?

RUTH HARLOE On my instrument (German, late 19th century), the soundholes are more than 10mm closer than usual to the tailpiece. This means the bridge and soundpost are differently placed, making it a challenge for a player who isn't used to using the instrument.

www.thestrad.com TOP 3 ONLINE POSTS

1
The right way to change your strings: bit.ly/1zNwYBZ

2
The Campanula: a new option for stringed instrument players (pictured): bit.ly/1F1SGtQ



3
Gary Karr: do conductors understand their double bass section? bit.ly/1CVe93q

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On the beat

Current news and events that have happened this month

Read all the breaking news in the string world online www.thestrad.com



One of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra's series of 'experience concerts' for young people

GERD MOTHES

Figures to learn from

Recent statistics on orchestral performance in Germany highlight the increasing significance of music education in the concert schedules. But what is the effect on audiences and sponsors?

By Peter Somerford

The latest analysis of concert statistics by the German Orchestra Association (DOV) highlights a significant shift by the country's orchestras, which are increasingly moving beyond traditional symphony concerts towards other kinds of performances. The figures for 2013–14 – the DOV collects data every two seasons – show in particular how important music education has become in the orchestras' activities. The number of concerts and events for children and young people increased by 10.8 per cent from 2011–12, reaching almost twice the number reported in 2003–4. By contrast, the amount of foreign touring dived 30 per cent from 2011–12 levels, taking the total of symphony and choral concerts down to its lowest number in more than ten years.

The DOV statistics don't include figures for open-air concerts, church concerts and classical crossover concerts organised by commercial providers. But the association's director Gerald Mertens says the latest survey indicated the increasing diversity of concert formats and the innovative ways that orchestras are taking music to the public. 'Back in the 1990s we had the symphony concert, the chamber concert, the schools concert, maybe a children's concert and maybe a family concert. That was the extent of any orchestra's offering,' he recalls. 'Today we have a huge range of different concert formats, reaching every age group.' He cites 'side-by-side' concerts (involving partnerships between professional orchestras and youth orchestras) and concerts of video-game music as among the most successful formats to have emerged in the past ten years.

Mertens dates the rise in German orchestras' social awareness, and the start of public awareness of music education by orchestras, to 2002 and Simon Rattle's arrival in Berlin. Rattle brought in the London Symphony Orchestra's music animateur, Richard McNicol, to create a comprehensive education programme for the Philharmonic, an initiative that proved enormously influential. 'Orchestras across Germany looked at what the Berlin Phil was doing,' says Mertens, 'and considered what they could do in the same vein.'

The timing squares with the experience of another venerated institution, the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. Its director, Andreas Schulz, went to the city authorities in 2002 requesting

more resources for music education. After a year of discussions, funding for a dedicated music education department was secured, as Schulz recalls: 'We immediately hired a specialist who developed several new formats. Now we have three members of staff dedicated to music education.'

In Leipzig, as in Berlin, new chief conductors brought with them fresh ideas about how the orchestra should engage with its community. Herbert Blomstedt had already introduced family concerts to the Gewandhaus season when he succeeded Kurt Masur in 1998, and when Riccardo Chailly took over in 2005 he added 'Discovery Concerts', which include on-stage discussions with a composer before the performance of a new work.

The education of musicians themselves has also been a factor in the development of orchestras' education and community programmes. Mertens points to the growth in opportunities, at conservatoires such as those in Detmold and Hanover, for musicians to study to become full-time music educators, or *Musikvermittler*, in orchestras and opera houses. Schulz also recognises the increasing openness of younger members of the Gewandhaus Orchestra to going into schools and speaking about their work, their instruments and their music. 'I still think that the Musikhochschule can do much more to train musicians in how to talk about music,' he says. 'We're now discussing how we can help players who want to do this kind of presenting, but who don't feel they have the right training.'

Commercially, education and community projects have proved increasingly attractive to sponsors, many of whom see more value in long-term social initiatives than in momentary glitz. 'Five years ago we had many more requests from sponsors for special gala evenings, or for us to invite star soloists,' says Schulz. 'But a lot has changed, and more and more requests today are for projects involving schools and kids. It's much easier to find a sponsor to support an education project.'

The Munich Philharmonic's education programme, 'Spielfeld Klassik', has been sponsored since 2011 by one of the city's biggest business names, BMW. 'You have to find the right partnership,' says Spielfeld Klassik director Simone Siwek. 'Some sponsors will want to support a foreign tour, but a big player like BMW sees how important our educational programme is for Munich, for the social fabric of the city.' The programme comprises around 150 events each season, reaching more than 34,000 people in and around Munich, from kindergarten pupils to university students and beyond. But the programme also includes a project at the Kampala Music School in Uganda, a reminder that orchestras are extending their educational activity beyond their immediate community, whether that be with special projects such as this one in Uganda, or with educational work during tours and residencies, such as those undertaken by the Gewandhaus Orchestra in London and New York.

For Mertens, the shift from traditional symphony concerts to more diverse programming does not represent any kind of cultural 'dumbing down', but is about tailoring the same high-quality concert experience to different age groups. 'What orchestras are doing now with their education programmes and new formats is simply responding to developments in society,' he says. 'We will always have symphony concerts, but every format will find its audience. With all these formats, the guiding principle is that the art itself must be untouched.'

MICHAEL PATRICK O'LEARY

NEWS IN BRIEF

Stanley Solomon (1917–2015)
bit.ly/16O4pxB
Canadian violist Stanley Solomon has died at the age of 97. Born in Toronto on 3 April 1917, he studied viola at the Curtis Institute of Music from 1939 to 1942. After war service and spells in the Baltimore, Columbia and Toronto Philharmonic orchestras, Solomon joined the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in 1946. There he served as principal viola from 1949 to 1983, and as principal emeritus until his retirement in 1988. He was also a member of the Parlow Quartet from 1946 to 1958.

'Barjansky' cello to go on sale
bit.ly/16mK1mJ
Julian Lloyd Webber has revealed plans to sell his cello – the c.1690–1700 'Barjansky' Stradivari – according to an interview with the *Birmingham Post*. The British cellist announced his retirement from playing in April last year. He acquired the instrument in 1983 via Sotheby's for a then-record (but undisclosed) price.

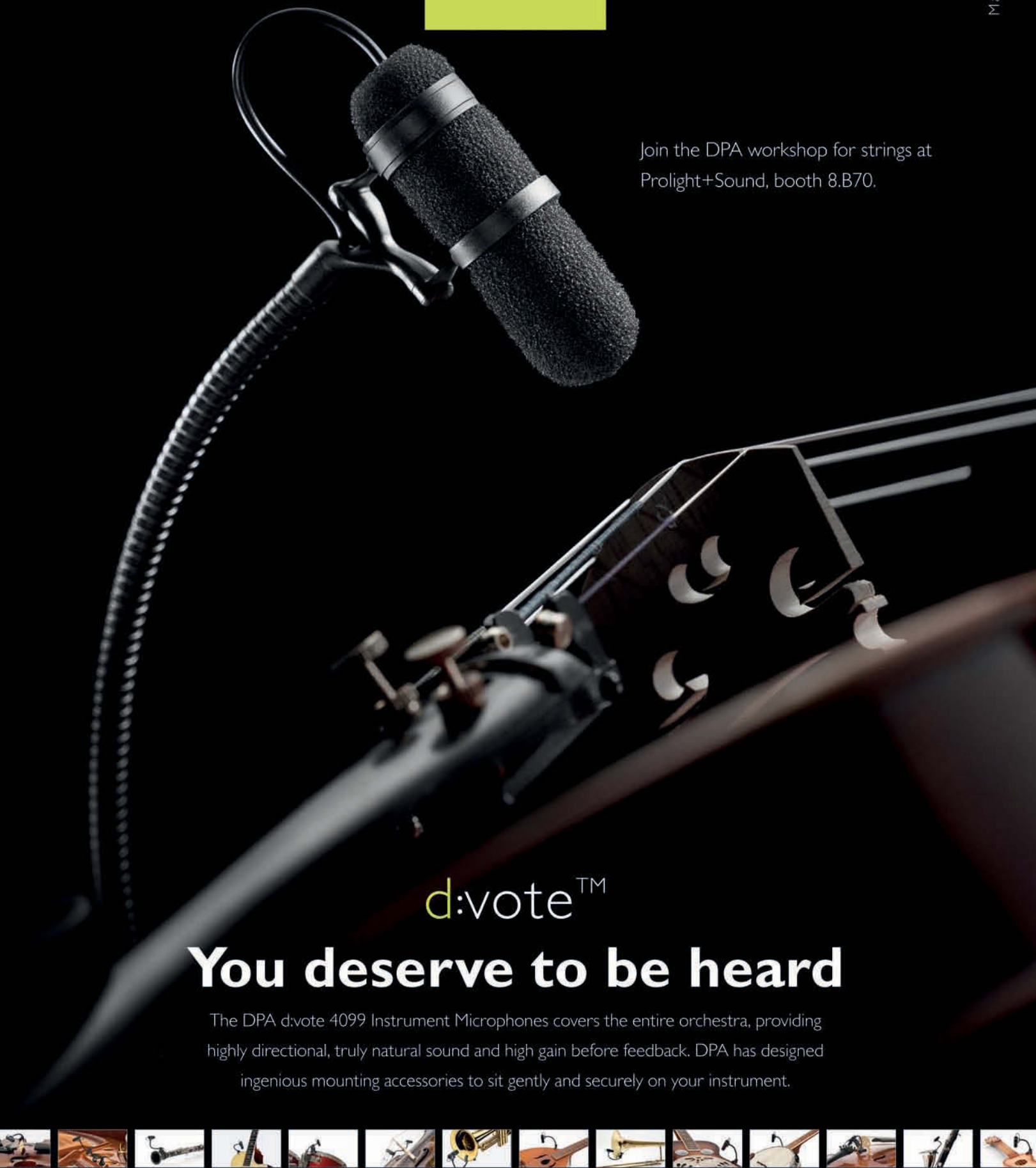


Hilary Hahn wins Grammy Award
bit.ly/16F6DyR
Violinist Hilary Hahn won the Grammy Award for Best Chamber Music Recording on 8 February. The 35-year-old American received the award for her album *In 27 Pieces*, comprising encores recorded with pianist Cory Smythe. The 2013 disc features 26 works commissioned by Hahn from contemporary composers, plus a 27th by Jeff Myers, who won a blind, open submission process to write the final work. In her acceptance speech, Hahn noted that the project was nearly a decade in the making.

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MUSIC UNDER THE STARS: Andrew Haveron, concertmaster of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, lights up the night sky as a performance at the Sydney Opera House is projected live on the building's iconic sails. With the theme 'Visions of Vienna', the concert was interspersed with images inspired by the works of Austrian artists Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele. Spectators lined the banks of Sydney Harbour to watch the performance, which was also broadcast live via YouTube. Photo: Ken Butti



Zimmermann forced to return 'Lady Inchiquin' Stradivari violin

Frank Peter Zimmermann has been obliged to give up the 1711 'Lady Inchiquin' Stradivari, his principal performing violin for the past 13 years. The 50-year-old violinist had the instrument on loan from the now-defunct Düsseldorf-based bank WestLB AG. However, it was recalled by company's legal successor, Portigon Financial Services AG, when it announced that the bank's art collection, comprising more than 400 artworks, was to be auctioned off. In total, the collection is valued at €100–150m.

As *The Strad* went to press, a buyer for the instrument had not been found, although Zimmermann himself had made an offer based on independent appraisals. It was understood that Portigon would be looking for a larger offer – possibly by as much as €1m.

Zimmermann acquired the 'Lady Inchiquin' in 2001, after the retirement of its previous player, a member of the Berlin Philharmonic. 'The violin feels like part of my body,' he told *The Strad* in March 2012. 'It has altered my musical ideas and how I play – I've had to buy new scores for most of my repertoire. In the past, when playing classics such as the Brahms or Beethoven concertos, I had to make lots of bow changes, but with the "Lady Inchiquin" I can use the original bowings. It also has a really rich sound that projects well, and I don't need to use so much vibrato. It's like great Italian cooking: if you have the best ingredients you don't need to add anything.'



Minnesota Orchestra to perform in Cuba

The Minnesota Orchestra is to perform two concerts in Havana, Cuba, on 15 and 16 May. The performances at the city's Teatro Nacional theatre will be the first by an American orchestra since President Obama ordered the restoration of full diplomatic relations with Cuba in January.

The programme will include Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy*, performed with the Cuban National Choir, and the composer's Symphony no.3 'Eroica', which the orchestra played in Havana on its first visit there in 1929. Then known as the Minneapolis Symphony, it last played in Cuba in 1930. 'So much has transpired, so much has changed in the world since then,' said music director Osmo Vänskä. 'What has remained constant is the power of this music to affect and build bonds between audiences and performers.'

Since the announcement in January, several US ensembles have expressed interest in performing in Cuba, with Chicago Symphony Orchestra music director Riccardo Muti making it clear during his orchestra's season announcement that he would aim to bring it to Havana. The New York Philharmonic has twice previously planned visits to the country, in 2009 and 2011, although neither came to fruition. The most recent time an American orchestra played there was in 1999, when the Milwaukee Symphony made a two-day trip to Cuba.

PREMIERE *of the* MONTH

Painting with sound

Music based on an artwork by Velázquez

COMPOSER **Hèctor Parra**
WORK ***Arachne***
PERFORMERS **Tana Quartet**
DATE **17 April**
PLACE **Musée du Louvre, Paris** www.louvre.fr/quatuor-tana



Hèctor Parra



Tana Quartet

'An abstract drama – a sort of whirling hurricane in permanent transformation,' is how Catalonian composer Hèctor Parra describes his new string quartet, commissioned by the Musée du Louvre to celebrate a current exhibition of works by Spanish painter Diego Velázquez at the Grand Palais in Paris. The one-movement piece was inspired by Velázquez's painting *Las Hilanderas*, also known as 'The Fable of Arachne', and lasts 15 minutes.

The painting – and so the quartet – tells the story of a young weaver who is turned into a spider by the Greek goddess Athena as punishment for her hubris. 'Arachne doesn't represent a linear story,' says Parra. 'Rather it explores emotional reactions and timbre, using energy impulses to imitate the warm reds, oranges and greens of Velázquez. There are rough, windy sounds with little harmonic content, but also dense chords that are homogeneous, vibrant and full of harmony.'

Parra developed the piece during improvisation sessions with the Tana Quartet. 'We tried different gestures and types of movement with the bow, passing energy between us like a wave,' says Jeanne Maisonhaute, the quartet's cellist. 'Velázquez's painting is full of vivacity and colour, so Parra wants us to use the bow to colour each note by playing with great speed and short movements, changing the pressure very fast and often and moving closer to and further away from the bridge. The idea is for the bow to be the paintbrush and the players the painters.'



Las Hilanderas

PARRA PHOTO ELISABETH SCHNEIDER. QUARTET PHOTO NICOLAS DRAPS

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COMPETITIONS





❶ Peruvian violinist **Eduardo Rios**, 19, has won first prize in the senior division of the **Sphinx Competition** for black and Latino string players. Rios, who studies with Robert Lipsett at the Colburn School in Los Angeles, received $50,000. The other major prizes were taken by Americans: second prize in the senior division went to violist Michael Casimir, 23, and third to violinist Annelle Gregory, 19. In the junior division the first prize went to 14-year-old American **Hannah White**.

❷ The **Belenus Quartet** won first prize in the string quartet division of the **International Franz Schubert and Modern Music Competition**, held in Graz, Austria. The Swiss ensemble – violinists Seraina Pfenninger and Anne Battegay, violist Esther Fritzsche and cellist Jonas Vischi – received €18,000. Second prize went to the Lyskamm Quartet from Italy and third prize to the Berlin-Tokyo Quartet from Israel/Japan. No first prize was awarded in the piano trio section, but second prize went to the Atanassov Trio from France.

❸ English violinist and Baroque specialist **Rachel Podger** has been awarded the Royal Academy of Music's **Bach Prize**. The award, supported by the Kohn Foundation, is given annually to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the performance and/or scholarly study of the music of J.S. Bach.

❹ There were two first prize winners at the **Witold Lutosławski International Cello Competition** in Warsaw, Poland. **Zuzanna Sosnowska**, 21, and **Maciej Kulakowski**, 18, are both from Poland and study with Wolfgang Emanuel Schmidt at the Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt in Weimar, Germany. Second prize went to Turkish cellist Dorukhan Doruk, 23, and no third prize was awarded. A total of €15,000 will be distributed among the winners.

APPOINTMENTS

● **Friederike Starkloff** has been named concertmaster of the NDR Radio Philharmonic in Hanover, Germany. The 24-year-old succeeds Volker Worlitzsch.

● **Kristen Bruya** has been appointed principal bass of the Minnesota Orchestra. She was previously assistant principal bass with the Toronto Symphony.

● Polish violinist **Janusz Wawrowski** has been awarded the decoration of honour 'Meritorious for Polish Culture' from the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.

FORTHCOMING COMPETITIONS & AWARDS

Trondheim International Chamber Music Competition in Trondheim, Norway, for trios with an average age of no more than 30 years. First prize €15,000 **Deadline** 20 April; competition 22–26 September www.ticc.no

Marie Cantagrill International Violin Competition in Saint-Lizier, France, for players in five ability categories. Top prize €2,000 **Deadline** 15 May; competition 26–28 June www.concoursviolonmariecantagrill.blogspot.fr

ASEAN International Concerto Competition in Jakarta, Indonesia, for pianists and violinists from South-East Asia, aged 18–24. Total prize fund $20,000 in cash, recording opportunities and concerts **Deadline** 18 May 2015; competition 1–8 August www.aicc.yayasanmusikjakarta.org

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BELENUS QUARTET PHOTO JOHANNES GELLNER















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So Mohr and David Warther, a fossil ivory supplier, worked alongside a polymer manufacturer to create AMW-814, a woven cloth and polymer composite. 'The cloth fibres add strength,' says Aniano. 'Natural and fossil ivory are not dissimilar from AMW-814 in that they have fibrous layers that bind and strengthen them.' Although the substitute also looks similar to ivory, its woven texture is visible under a magnifying lens, hopefully making its synthetic nature obvious to customs officials. Additionally, its weight is suitable for ivory replacement. 'It has a similar density to ivory so will not alter the balance of the bow,' says bow maker Matt Wehling. 'Most makers acquire wood with a specific strength and balance in mind, so a denser tip material may limit their wood choice.' Aniano adds that for players the action of the bow can be changed by the smallest alteration to the tip weight: 'Trying to return the proper balance by weighting the frog is nearly impossible because the bow would become too heavy.'

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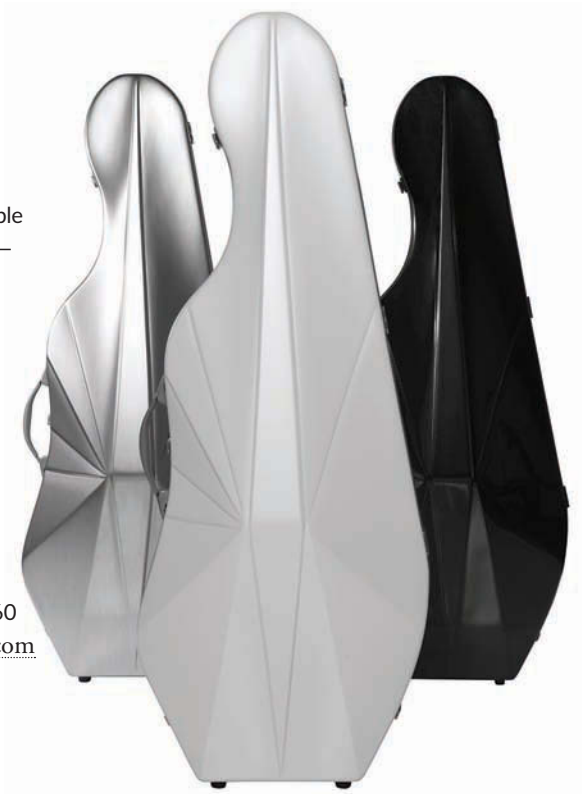
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SARAH CHANG

The Korean-born US violinist practises Bartók and Bernstein – but never before she's played all her scales

I do the same scales, arpeggios and vibrato exercises every day. Sometimes my mum and brother stop me to say, 'You have done your scales for 25 years. Don't you know them by now?' But I really do believe that the basics are the most important things, regardless of whether I'm practising for 20 minutes or 8 hours. If I have a 10am rehearsal or a day of meetings, I'll start my exercises at 9am at the latest and forget about the repertoire until later.

I use a combination of the Flesch and Galamian scale systems, with a bit of my teacher Dorothy DeLay thrown in as well. Each day, to get my fingers warmed up, I go through four octaves in every scale that allows it. Then I choose one key to work on using different bowings, 3rds, octaves and other variations, using double-stops from the Flesch system. It takes me about 15 minutes to go through all the keys, and then another 15 to do all the arpeggios, double-stops and vibrato exercises. So if everything's going well and my fingers are cooperating, I can be done with my warm-up in 30 minutes. But I am not a morning person – I can't even make coffee! So some days it can take me 45 minutes or even an hour.

Today I'm practising C major. It's the most difficult scale to play in tune because you can't hide behind any sharps and flats. It's very exposed, so I always choose it when I'm trying to be hard on myself. It's like looking at your face without any make-up on. I go back to correct my tuning all the time – it isn't just a warm-up exercise. Then I go through my 3rds and octaves, and I'm feeling brave today so I do my 10ths as well. When I'm playing pieces with a lot of 5ths, 6ths or other intervals, I add those to my exercises too.



CLIFF WATT

At the moment I'm working on Bernstein's *West Side Story* Suite, which I'm playing with the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra. After that I have a recital of the Franck Sonata, a Brahms sonata, Bartók's *Romanian Folk Dances* and Ravel's *Tzigane*. Then I have to play the Dvořák Concerto, so there's a lot going on at the moment. I work on *West Side Story* for the majority of the day and touch on the Bartók, which is new to me, whenever I can. I try to programme and learn at least one new piece every season.

The Bernstein has been arranged for me by David Newman. He's had to stick to Bernstein's version quite carefully because the music is still owned by the Bernstein estate, but even two days ago he was sending me rewrites and whole new passages, and the concert is next week! I'm playing from memory, so I try to get the rewrites embedded in my head and fingers as quickly as possible. Then I work through the piece section by section, thinking about structure, phrasing, musicality and dynamics. I've watched the movie of *West Side Story*, seen the stage version and listened to the original soundtrack; I've also got my hands on video footage of Bernstein recording it with the singers and telling them to be more lyrical. It's fascinating.

Moving on to Bartók after Bernstein is a shock. They're like night and day! I begin by going through the piece slowly with a pianist friend of mine so that I can hear its structure and sound, rather than just trying to make sense of it from the piano score. I find that helps a lot, because the violin part is only about a tenth of what's really going on and doesn't always make sense by itself. Once I have a full sense of the piece I start working on it with the pianist, section by section, trying to get it under my skin in its complete form. Bartók's markings are scarce, but those he did write are dead on. Even if I try a bowing another way, usually I end up going back to what he originally wrote because it's better. Music like this is more about your musical standpoint than your technique. Technique will come with practice, but if you don't sound convincing, as though you are playing straight from the heart with an honest interpretation of the music, it won't sound good.

Ideally, I would have a month off and dedicate 100 per cent of my practice time to the new piece I'm learning, but that's not realistic with all the concerts going on right now. I just have to find time when I can.

INTERVIEW BY PAULINE HARDING



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A PROUD *INHERITANCE*

Dramatic readings of well-known repertoire prevailed at the International Boris Goldstein Violin Competition Bern, conceived by Zakhar Bron as a tribute to his former teacher. Rebecca Schmid reports

Despite his long career as a violinist and teacher, Boris Goldstein (1922–87) is not one of the most recognisable names in the pantheon of string players. The career of the Odessa-born musician was mostly confined to the Soviet Union – his precocious beginnings stymied by the post-war regime that turned against artists, intellectuals and especially Jews. It was with the aim of promoting awareness of Goldstein's place in violin history that his former student Zakhar Bron founded the International Boris Goldstein Violin Competition Bern, which took place from 22–30 January this year. Bron also conceived the event as a way of honouring the man whom, after Igor Oistrakh, he still considers to be his most important mentor.

As a child prodigy, Goldstein received special protection from Stalin – not to mention praise from legendary figures such as Rachmaninoff and Kreisler – but he was not selected by authorities to perform in the West, unlike his more fortunate compatriots David Oistrakh and Mstislav Rostropovich. He nevertheless became famous in Russia, known for combining technical precision with a beautiful tone, and for the effectiveness of his fingerings. One source of income was as a tester of instruments in state collections – reportedly he knew exactly how to get the best possible sound out of inferior work. As a performer, however, he was forced on to secondary circuits, which paradoxically led to his developing an unusually wide repertoire, including music by Honegger and Bloch. He championed the works of both of these Swiss composers (at that time, knowledge of Bloch's Jewish roots had not crossed the Iron Curtain). He also taught at the Gnessin Institute in Moscow, where Zakhar Bron numbered among his students. After suffering increasingly hostile treatment, in 1974 he emigrated to Germany with his family, when he was well past his prime.

It was with his mentor's legacy in mind that Bron selected the required works for the competition. Bloch's Sonata no.1 was included for the second round, where students also choose two pieces arranged by Jascha Heifetz (who had once called Goldstein 'the USSR's most brilliant violin talent'). The jury featured a Goldstein student from the Germany years, Michael Guttman, who was made aware of the event by Vadim Repin – himself a protégé of Bron's, and whom Goldstein considered to be a kind of musical great-grandchild. Other jurors included Igor Ozim, Viktor Pikayzen and Ida Haendel, who voted by Skype from the US.

Guttman drew parallels between his erstwhile tutor's teaching methods and those of Goldstein. 'Much of Zakhar Bron's demanding attitude towards his students comes from Boris Goldstein,' he told me. 'As friendly as he [Goldstein] was, right before and after each lesson he was a different man. He would demand more and more precision, and more and more sound. And, like Goldstein, Bron has a solution to any technical problem.'

The high number of Bron students who emerged as finalists caused some controversy on various online forums (see last issue). It was certainly noticeable that of the initial 31 participants, selected from 39 submissions, only a third were students of Bron. By the final round, only one – Benjamin Baker, who would emerge with sixth prize – had not studied with him. But although this fact might have seemed dubious from afar, once I had heard the finalists' performances of Mozart concertos, with the Zakhar Bron Chamber Orchestra accompanying, I could only concur with most of the ▹

jury's decisions. (Each finalist also performed a Romantic concerto with piano accompaniment.)

All of Bron's students, from the Grand Prix winner Mone Hattori to the fifth-placed Furong Li, boasted a robust low range, singing high notes and a strong but flexible bowing arm. This was perhaps most conspicuous in the small frame of Hattori, who collected CHF15,000 (£9,800) after performing Mozart's Concerto no.3 in the final round. Although I found her to be generally lacking in dynamic nuance and personality, her precocity emerged through her restrained, honeyed tone in the Adagio. Even stronger was Waxman's *Carmen Fantasy*, played at the prizewinners' concert the next day, which brought forth the required dose of cantabile and dramatic integrity despite the occasional harsh tone.

Both Aleksey Semenenko and Stefan Tarara, who tied for the first prize, demonstrated an unparalleled level of refined musicianship and stage presence. Semenenko in particular, performing Mozart's Concerto no.5, imbued every moment with meaning, creating an almost improvisatory feel in the opening Allegro, a melting, crying tone in the inner Adagio and, through expert use of rubato, a nearly operatic dialogue in the final Menuetto. In the winners' concert he turned Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Figaro Variations on a Theme by Rossini* into a mini-drama of its own, allowing the lines to speak with idiomatic Italian accents.

Although I was less charmed by Tarara's performance, there was no denying the professionalism with which he delivered Mozart's Concerto no.4, with its incisive attacks and use of colour across the violin, always with a specific dramatic purpose in mind. In the inner Andante he blended masterfully with the orchestra, only to retake command suddenly. He also rendered the chirping melody of the final Allegro with the most authenticity of any version that afternoon. If his performance of Paganini's *Introduction and Variations on 'Nel cor più non mi sento'* the following day was somewhat flashy, Tarara left the audience in no doubt of his technical prowess, his sharp grasp of musical form, and his fearless thespianism.





Top Cantabile and dramatic integrity from Mone Hattori *Gallery* Aleksey Semenenko; Stefan Tarara; Shiori Terauchi; Arsenis Selalmazidis; Furong Li

'When a real talent arrives, that is always a unique thing,' said Bron, also stating his hope that the competition would provide a platform for young talented artists who deserved to be associated with his tutor's name. This first iteration of the contest appeared to have done just that, with many of the finalists demonstrating an ability to interpret each of the required pieces with freedom and confidence, while also respecting a given work's stylistic boundaries. It will be interesting to see how many names on this edition's roster will go on to enjoy the international fame that eluded Goldstein for so much of his life.

WINNERS

GRAND PRIX
Mone Hattori, 15 (Japan)
FIRST PRIZE
Stefan Tarara, 28 (Germany);
Aleksey Semenenko, 26 (Ukraine)
THIRD PRIZE
Shiori Terauchi, 24 (Japan)
FOURTH PRIZE
Arsenis Selalmazidis, 24 (Greece/Russia)
FIFTH PRIZE
Furong Li, 24 (China)
SIXTH PRIZE
Benjamin Baker, 24 (New Zealand/UK)

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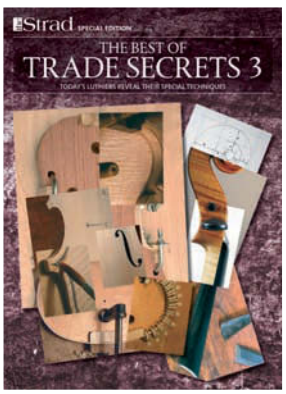
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THE HOLE TRUTH

Did the shape of the f-holes in old Italian violins come about through 'accidental fluctuations', as new research suggests? No, argues Stewart Pollens, and the theory is simplistic at best

In February, researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) published a paper entitled 'The Evolution of Air Resonance Power Efficiency in the Violin and Its Ancestors' in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society* (bit.ly/1BmsWpI). It has sparked a debate primarily with regard to the contention that 'by evolution-rate analysis... changes [in violin f-hole length] are found to be consistent with mutations arising within the range of accidental replication fluctuations from craftsmanship limitations.'

The claim that the violin's resonance changed as a result of the accumulation of small 'accidental' errors by Stradivari, Nicolò Amati and Guarneri 'del Gesù' and their followers is spurious. While, as the authors of the study assert, it may be true that minor differences in the shape of f-holes are due to the vagaries of handcrafting, the essential shape, dimensions and placement of f-holes have traditionally been governed by rigid proportional 'rules' established in Cremona in the early 16th century. Deviation from those rules might be subtle (such as the way Guadagnini occasionally placed the bridge-positioning 'nicks' below the centres of his f-holes), whereas gross alterations (such as the simple slots used by Chanot and Savart in their experimental violins) failed not because they were acoustically ineffective but because they were visually unaesthetic. Stradivari used drafting instruments and templates to position and shape his f-holes, hence their regularity. The elongated and open shape of the f-holes carved by Guarneri 'del Gesù' in his later years are certainly not because of slips of the knife, nor would violin connoisseurs consider them to be 'in the expected range of craftsmanship fluctuations' as the MIT researchers' calculations would indicate. Rather, they are intentional departures from the norm.

Acoustic power was not the primary goal of violin makers

The other controversial conclusions of these researchers are that f-hole length is the primary factor governing the 'acoustic power' of violins, and that f-holes steadily increased in length from the 16th century until the death of 'del Gesù'. They dismiss plate thicknesses (based on averages) and arching height (based on a single height measurement) as of secondary importance, although every violin maker is aware that subtleties of graduation are critical to the tonal characteristics of an instrument. In fact, flat arching is generally associated with a more powerful tone: late 'del Gesù' instruments with pancake-flat tops are among the loudest violins. Prior to the development of large symphony orchestras, immense concert halls, and the Romantic and post-Romantic concerto repertoire, brute acoustic power was not the primary goal of violin makers. As a result, violins designed in earlier times were later modified to produce greater volume. This was not accomplished by modifying the f-holes, but rather by re-graduating the top and back plates, changing the neck angle and projection, fitting new bass-bars and bridges, and switching over to modern strings made of high-tensile steel, other metals and synthetic materials.

The paper also contains a graph showing the progression of f-hole length from the days of Amati to Guarneri. The data for this graph is skewed by the eccentric instruments made by 'del Gesù' in the last three or four years of his life. Clearly he was on to something, although his instruments are less often copied than those of Stradivari, despite the world's continued preoccupation with acoustic power. If the researchers' graph of f-hole length were to extend to instruments made after the death of 'del Gesù' and include makers besides those of the Amati, Stradivari and Guarneri families, it would revert to the mean, and the lengths of the late 'del Gesù' f-holes would just be a blip on the curve. Other blips would include the f-holes of various early Brescian makers, as well as those of the 17th-century Alemannic school.

A MISSING LINK BETWEEN BAROQUE AND CLASSICAL

Baroque violinist Daniel Sepec and Christine Schornsheim, keyboardist and early music specialist, describe the disorienting, emotional musical world of C.P.E. Bach, as they create the first recording of the composer's complete works for violin and keyboard

DANIEL SEPEC

The violin and keyboard sonatas of C.P.E. Bach are not very well known or recorded, which is a shame because when I first heard this music it was a revelation – I was astonished by their inventiveness. He was writing during a time of stylistic change, and these pieces are a door that opens to the world of early Haydn and Mozart, but they are also a missing link between the Baroque and Classical periods because Carl Philipp was writing in a Baroque style while combining new elements in the Classical language.

As a composer Carl Philipp was extremely productive and very diverse. Structurally his sonatas fit the Classical model, but within that structure he can be unusual, and you can suddenly lose your orientation. You don't always know when to breathe, sometimes the pieces are longer than you expect, or the reprise is not where you thought it would be, or is in a strange key. He had a unique way of writing, which is a bit rough and stubborn sometimes and at other times very modern, so his music sounds fresh to our ears. His approach is in the *empfindsamer Stil* ('sensitive style') – it is remarkably emotional, and these emotions often change quickly. Unlike much Baroque music, which can be quite official-sounding, his music can be soft, describing an inner world.

He was much more a keyboardist than a violinist – his father wrote music that was more violinistic – so playing this music is a challenge, although no more so than with Beethoven or Schubert where the music is often not especially well written for the violin. For the modern player it is not simply a matter of playing the notes; you have to know how to play the many ornaments and understand the historical style. The ornaments tend to be easier to realise on the keyboard than on the violin, and it is important to play them naturally, with good expression and with equal interest in the keyboard part.



The tangent piano used by Christine Schornsheim for this recording

In some of his harpsichord sonatas Carl Philipp writes in the repetitions his own ornaments, and you can hear his authentic voice. We decided this was the most authentic way to approach the cadenzas – not to copy him, but to see how he would have done them and the tools he used. It is not really possible for two people to play a cadenza by improvising, so we had to make a road-map. By playing this music a lot you enter into the spirit of it, and the ornaments and cadenzas become easier.

We made the recording in Mülheim, in a church with a wooden roof and a wonderful acoustic. It was during the 2014 World Cup, and when Germany won there was a lot of noise outside which made it difficult to find silent moments. We had to resort to early mornings and late-night sessions, so the entire session took twelve days. The instrument I used for the recording is my own violin by Johann Friedrich Lorenz from 1792, and I used a late Baroque bow by Ralph Ashmead from the 1990s. The strings are by Damian Dlugolecki. Sometimes I use a gut D string wound with metal, but for this recording I used pure gut, which has a very special and characterful sound. I also used a wooden mute, which makes the violin much quieter.

INTERVIEW BY CHLOE CUTTS



CHRISTINE SCHORNSHEIM

The idea to record the complete sonatas for violin and keyboard only emerged during the project. We wanted to show the development from the first very simple sonatas to the extremely complicated Fantasia Wq80, and the huge variety of small nuances. C.P.E. Bach's oeuvre gets progressively more expressive: the early sonatas, such as Wq71 or 72, are simple in structure and the movements shorter. They are not easy to play but Carl Philipp doesn't overload them with ideas. Then his sonatas get longer – he likes to repeat his ideas, so one sonata might last for 20 minutes. That is my only criticism of his music: at times he goes a little overboard.

The Fantasia Wq80 was originally written for keyboard – the violin part was added later. It is a late piece, with the beautiful title 'C.P.E. Bach's sentiments'. It is the most inventive work in this collection and is very rich in effects. If the music truly represents his feelings, the Fantasia would be a key to how he thought and composed. It is a torn piece, with outbursts of emotion and extreme contrasts ranging from grief and desperation to rage, anger, even madness – though it ends with a cheerful Allegro. The entire palette of emotions and expressions is contained in this piece.

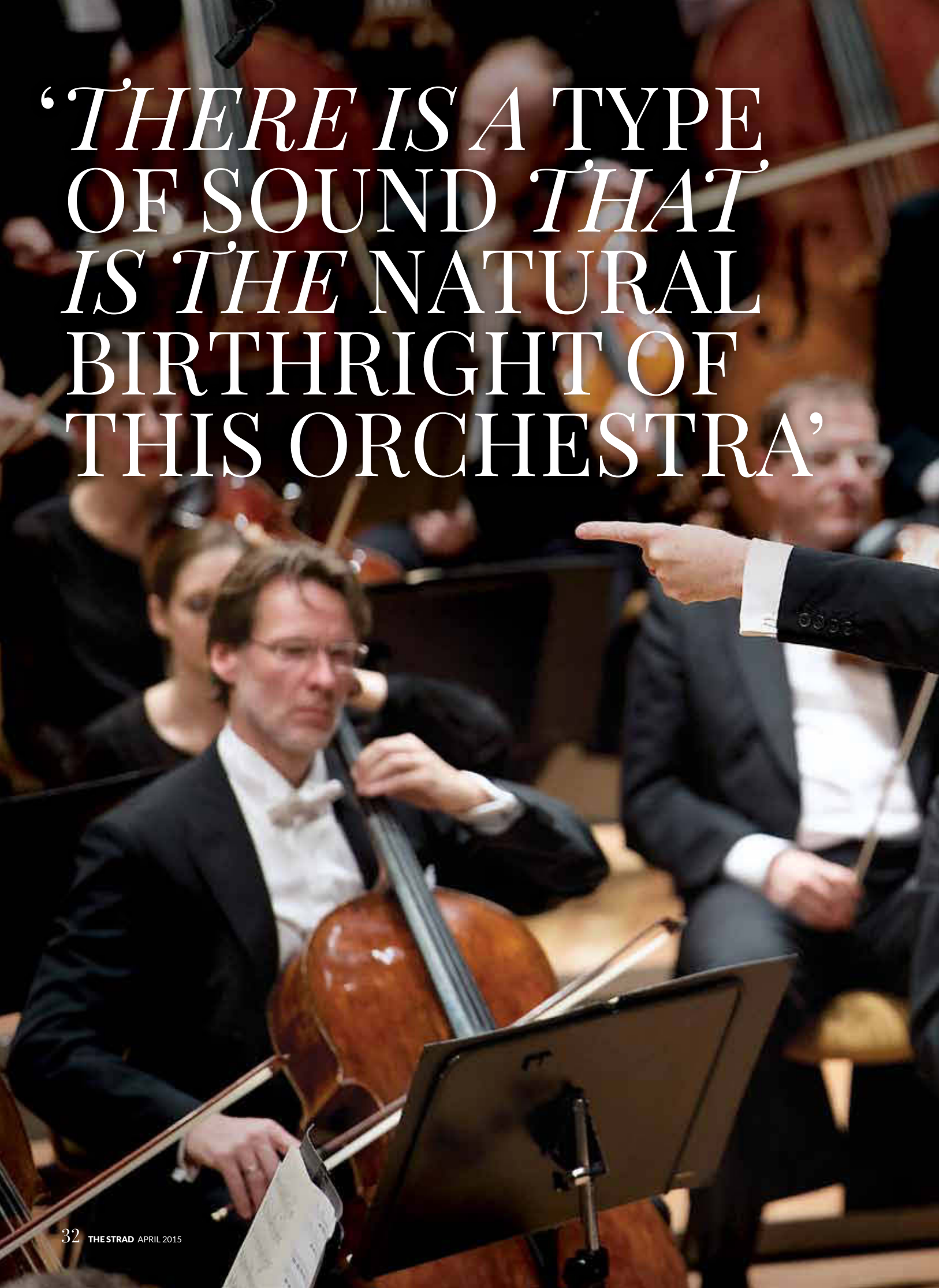
C.P.E. Bach's music is uncomfortable in that you really have to tap into it and develop it. Sometimes the notation is sparse, so you have to think of ways to fill it and decide on expressions to furnish every detail. For our recording we experimented and improvised a lot. You have to analyse what you find in his other works: for example, he had favourite ornamentations, such as a conjunct double appoggiatura or a combination of a trill and a turn, and he loved to extend ornaments, even in the smallest of spaces such as a semiquaver. Modification can also mean changing the dynamics, even adding pauses – the important thing is to create surprises.

For the early sonatas I used a harpsichord instead of a clavichord, which is too soft next to a violin. And because a fortepiano from C.P.E. Bach's period would have been impossible to find, I used a tangent piano for the later works, which will divide opinion because there is no evidence that C.P.E. Bach saw or played such an instrument. But I think if he had encountered it he would have written for it, because the tangent piano has such a variety of colours and suits his ideas and music perfectly.

INTERVIEW BY KATINKA WELZ

C.P.E. Bach Complete Works for Keyboard and Violin (including sonatas Wq71–78, Arioso Wq79 and Fantasia Wq80). Daniel Sepec (vn) and Christine Schornsheim (kbd). Released on 5 May on Myrios Classics

PHOTOS STEPHAN CAHEN



‘*THERE IS A* TYPE OF SOUND *THAT IS THE* NATURAL BIRTHRIGHT OF THIS ORCHESTRA’



MONIKA RITTERSHAUS

In its 133-year history, the Berlin Philharmonic has cultivated a distinct, unmistakeable string sound. **Philip Clark** talks to principal conductor Simon Rattle and delves into the recording archives to find the roots of that subterranean, resonant tone

In February, Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic brought a programme of Mahler's 'Resurrection' Symphony and *Tableau* by German composer Helmut Lachenmann to the Royal Festival Hall (RFH)on London's South Bank – a residency celebrating Rattle's 60th birthday which had opened with Sibelius's seven symphonies signed off with a pair of works that cut deep inside the fable, traditions and possible futures of Austro-German composed music.

In the same hall 26 years earlier, on 6 October 1988, an alarmingly frail Herbert von Karajan led the Berlin Philharmonic through Brahms's First Symphony and the string-orchestra realisation of Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*. Ten months later Karajan was dead and the orchestra, depending on your point of view, had to begin a period of renewal or, now bereft of its figurehead and big-sonic-ideas man, it would never quite achieve those same artfully crafted heights again.

The Berlin Philharmonic string section sits necessarily centre stage in any story about the orchestra's evolution because the music it plays places the string section at its core. The same could of course be claimed for other historically significant German orchestras such as the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra or the Dresden Staatskapelle (or, in Austria, the Vienna Philharmonic), but the string section of the Berlin Philharmonic commands unique kudos. Karajan's totemic 1973 recording of Strauss's 1896 tone poem *Also sprach Zarathustra* typifies those qualities that get people excited. The opening super-low sustained C in the double basses has a rumbling depth that steps outside music to reconnect our ears with the stuff of sound itself.

When later in the piece, during 'Das Grablied', the first violins float out from the orchestral mass, their tone is ecstatic yet softer than soft – the very softness of the sound allowing it to slice through the busy surrounding ensemble with the cool determination of an arrowhead. Karajan's strings could float like a butterfly and sting like a bee; they were richly marinated, yet versatile and rarely overcooked. True enough, especially when Karajan's relationship with the orchestra began to crumble during the mid-1980s, the Berlin Philharmonic could default to bulletproof robustness – a polished, high-voltage surface sound that could feel businesslike and oddly chanceless (although not during Karajan's 1988 RFH performance, in which *Verklärte Nacht* proceeds with shamanistic concentration and power).

This opens up a whole bunch of questions. The idea of 'a Berlin Philharmonic string sound' is woven inside the consciousness of classical music-speak. But what defines the Berlin Philharmonic's string sound? From where did it derive? And almost three decades on from Karajan's death – and two music directors later: Claudio Abbado took the orchestra over in 1989, and Rattle succeeded him in 2002 – how has this sound moved with the times? We talk, overly casually, of *a* Berlin Philharmonic string sound, but Rattle's orchestra is clearly not Karajan's – and the orchestra Karajan inherited from Wilhelm Furtwängler in 1954 became utterly transformed by his long reign on the podium.
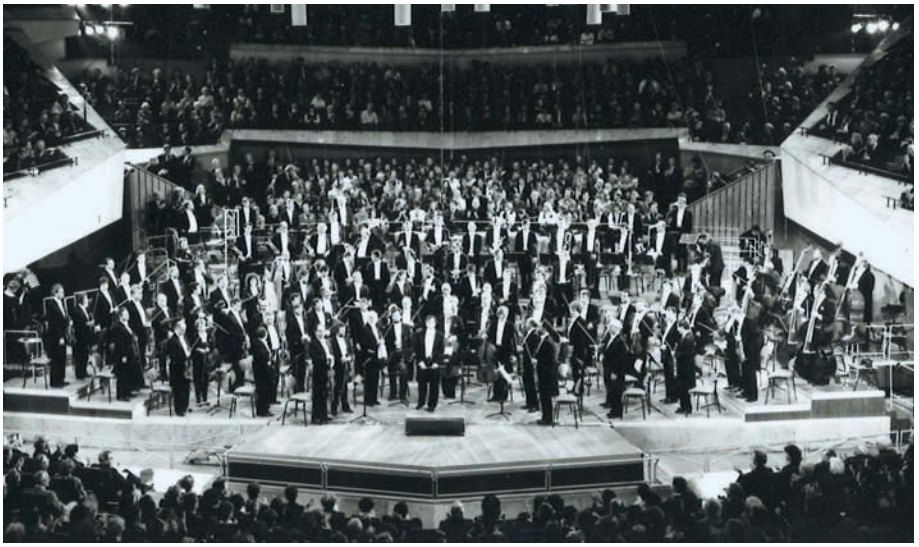
> 'THE SOUND BUILDS IN A WAVE FORMATION FROM THE BOTTOM UPWARDS'
> *– Simon Rattle*

'You talk about sound,' Rattle tells me over the phone from his home in Berlin, 'but before you think about sound you must think about how this city and orchestra have changed over the past 30 years. We now have 26 different nationalities playing in the orchestra, which reflects how Berlin has changed since reunification. Now there are not so many musicians left who played with Karajan; there are members of the orchestra who weren't even born when he died. Even during the relatively short period that Claudio was in charge, three years before I arrived, the sound of the orchestra had changed enormously. Claudio found something lighter within the extraordinarily glutinous Karajan sound – and he knew how to tease it out. ▹


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Wilhelm Furtwängler, who led the Berlin Philharmonic between 1922 and 1954, capitalised on the vigorous physicality of the string section



Sounds of the times: Claudio Abbado, who succeeded Herbert von Karajan in 1989, 'found something lighter within the extraordinary glutinous Karajan sound,' says Rattle

'There is a type of sound that is the natural birthright of this orchestra. I always used to describe the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra as a fizzy white wine, but the Berlin Philharmonic is, of course, the deepest red – and you couldn't change that even if you wanted to, and you'd be an idiot to try. The sound of the Berlin Philharmonic, and its string section, builds in a wave formation from the bottom upwards.' Thinking about Rattle's London residency, I suggest that this basic sound is a good fit for Sibelius and Mahler, but that presumably tackling a work by Lachenmann – who deconstructs conventional instrumental techniques, requiring string instruments to be strategically arid and toneless, and generating sounds in which pitch can be incidental – takes major adjustment? 'Since Abbado the orchestra has become more flexible – but this basic sound, which is its personality, makes certain things more difficult to do than others. You have to find another way of playing.'

We'll return to Lachenmann anon, but in the meantime Rattle throws me a historical bone: 'Furtwängler's 1942 version of Beethoven's Ninth, for me, epitomises what the Berlin Philharmonic string section is about,' he says. 'The playing is more physical and vigorous than seems possible. Arthur Nikisch, who preceded Furtwängler, instilled into the orchestra a beauty of tone – he was interested in long breaths and bows; and what you hear Furtwängler doing in 1942 is harnessing that idea – re-igniting it, in fact.'

The Berlin Philharmonic came into being via an act of rebellion. In 1882 a group of 50 disillusioned musicians from the Bilse'chen Kapelle – a pickup orchestra conducted by Benjamin Bilse which played regular concerts in Berlin – decided to go it alone; Bilse's attempt to press-gang them into travelling fourth class to Warsaw for a concert was the moment that an already tense relationship fragmented. From the get-go, contemporary reviews suggest that the orchestra – then the Berliner Philharmonisches Orchester – boasted an especially fine string section. But, frustratingly, this period of the orchestra's history occurred off the radar of recording.

And then, suddenly, in September 1913 we can hear the Berlin Philharmonic. Only a few months after the premiere of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, the orchestra entered a Berlin recording studio where, under their conductor Alfred Hertz, they cut a suite of instrumental extracts from Wagner's *Parsifal*. And it would be very satisfying and journalistically neat to report that these crackly relics of shellac contain major clues about the likely future of the Berlin Philharmonic string sound. In truth, though, they sound terrible – characterised by rough intonation and raggedly ensemble.

Enter Nikisch, who only two months later conducted the first complete recording of a Beethoven symphony – his Fifth – with the Berlin Philharmonic. There is a mind behind this playing, which has corresponding finesse and polish. In the slow movement you hear those long breaths to which Rattle refers in the sustained string lines; in the scherzo Nikisch makes his strings articulate with grit as they ricochet against the woodwinds. Between the pre-history and now, Nikisch remains a shadowy presence – a figure of transition. When he died in 1922, before establishing a proper profile on record, Furtwängler was invited to lead the orchestra by Louise Wolff, the widow of concert agent Hermann Wolff.

A 1930 recording of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto no.3 finds Furtwängler unleashing an unwieldy wall of strings that does no favours to the delicate balance of line working against line – but the elated high of the string sound, beautifully in tune and rigorously disciplined, begins to feel like familiar Berlin Philharmonic terrain. And this, apparently, was no fluke. On 13 September 1939 Furtwängler led a performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony that remains perpetually contemporary. The surrounding context – the performance took place only ten days after Neville Chamberlain had declared war on Hitler – is perhaps difficult to unravel from the notes. ▹

FURTWANGLER IMAGE ARCHIV BERLINER PHILHARMONIKER; ABBADO IMAGE COURTESY DG

But purely objectively, Furtwängler's high-velocity tempos, the strings no longer in the brace position but relishing the prospect of riding the waves of cosmic energy, achieve an emotional smack that leaves broader historical concerns far behind.

The Berlin Philharmonic would emerge from the Second World War a broken rump. During the war the orchestra's library of music, many of its instruments and the first Berlin Philharmonie were all destroyed during air raids. But the orchestra emerged with a renewed appreciation of its now six-decade history. If German culture had been tainted by the sheer madness of everything that had happened during the previous decade, this orchestra could play its part in making amends. Szymon Goldberg, a Jewish Pole who played with a vigorous, throbbing vibrato had been concertmaster of the orchestra before the war, but was forced out by the Nazi regime, against the wishes of Furtwängler. The mission now was to hit again the intensity of that pre-war sound.

Karajan, by the time he succeeded Furtwängler in 1954, was a respected, but hardly universally loved, figure. He was, however, fixated by an unshakable view of how he wanted the orchestra to sound – the Berlin Philharmonic string section was about to be overhauled as never before. A year before ascending the Berlin Philharmonic throne, Karajan had been in London working with the Philharmonia, and many of the ideas about string technique he was about to bring to his new orchestra were workshopped there. In Richard Osborne's 1998 biography of Karajan, former concertmaster of the Philharmonia Hugh Bean suggested that part of the reason why Karajan achieved such compelling results with strings was that he was not a string player himself: 'His gestures were so sympathetic. The stick technique was so fluent. The stick itself never stopped moving – it simply flowed over us.'

Osborne's book also contains this fascinating little analysis of Karajan's attitude to strings, from Walter Legge, founder of the Philharmonia and recording producer for EMI: 'We worked together for years on the theory that no entrance must start without the string vibrating and the bow already moving, and when you get a moving bow touching an already vibrating string, you get a beautiful entry. But if either of these bodies is not alive and already moving, you get a click, and Karajan had already calculated all that.' ▹

Karajan (left) overhauled the Berlin Philharmonic's string section during his tenure from 1954–89; his successor, Claudio Abbado, brought greater flexibility







A PLAYER'S VIEW

Olaf Maninger, the Berlin Philharmonic's principal cellist, explains how the orchestra achieves its distinctive string sound, and its development over the past two decades

When auditioning new string players for the Berlin Philharmonic, we consider each musician's sound and ask ourselves how it will fit into the rest of the section. If they're successful, the player will have a two-year probation period with the orchestra during which they'll perform around 140 concerts per season, talk to the other players and encounter a lot of repertoire for the first time.

One of the Berlin Philharmonic's main assets is its history. When they join, each player seems to respond to the sense of tradition ingrained in the orchestra, and they naturally try to find their own way to fit in. They might receive advice on how a piece should be played, much of which is non-verbal, as there are many ways of communicating your thoughts constructively to other section players, without being insulting. That communication extends to the other sections, and it's apparent when each section responds to what the other parts of the orchestra are doing.

When I joined the orchestra in 1994 the average age of the cello section was about 45. We still had ten founder members of the Twelve Cellos of the Berlin Philharmonic ensemble. Now, all of them have left and the average age is much younger. I think this is true of most of the orchestra; and the younger generation is generally more flexible and willing to experiment. Simon Rattle is very encouraging in that respect: he asked us to try to find the right tone for each piece of music – whether it should be played with or without vibrato, for instance. The Berlin Philharmonic sound is not always rich, deep and dark – it's whatever the music needs, which is not always the 'most beautiful' sound.

The orchestra's sound has certainly been influenced by its home venue, the Berlin Philharmonie. The acoustic is warm and resonant, quite different from halls such as the Vienna Musikverein or Concertgebouw Amsterdam. Given the number of concerts we perform year-round in this hall, it has indisputably had an effect on the way we play together.

INTERVIEW BY CHRISTIAN LLOYD

MANINGER PHOTO JIM RAKETE

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The Berlin Philharmonic at the orchestra's resident concert hall, the Berlin Philharmonie. The 26 different nationalities in the orchestra are a reflection of how Berlin has changed since reunification, says Rattle



KARAJAN HAD ZERO INTEREST IN INTERPRETING MUSIC THAT WORKED WITH ANY OPPOSING IDEA OF WHAT BEAUTY MIGHT BE

Legge's suggestion that Karajan had gone deep into the physics of stringed instruments and 'already calculated all that' anticipates, unwittingly, some of the later criticisms levelled at the conductor – that his work was indeed calculating, and that sound as directed by his baton could be stiff and manically micromanaged. Karajan's classic recordings of yardstick string works like *Verklärte Nacht* and Strauss's *Metamorphosen* imply that the psychology of Karajan's approach has more layers than is at first apparent. Certainly Karajan had zero interest in interpreting music that worked with any opposing idea of what beauty might be – the rugged, scattering sprawl of Varèse's music, with wind and percussion to the fore, perhaps symbolising everything he was against; but otherwise Karajan found liberation with deliberation. To shade string tone as subtlety as he did, he needed purchase on those sounds – then he could fade and move sound with the ease of sliding a lever on a mixing board.

Abbado lightened the tone, but also programmed music that would have been unthinkable during the Karajan era – music by Nono, Stockhausen and György Kurtág included. The unified swell of a pear-shaped string section might work well for Bruckner and Brahms, but it isn't necessarily going to work well inside the flinty, angular lines of Nono and Stockhausen, where the shapes need to be thrown in a different way.

And so, Simon Rattle, how do you corral the Berlin Philharmonic, with this long and indelible history, into performing *Tableau* by Lachenmann – music that focuses on texture and timbres that disintegrate in the moment of being sounded, sounds often on the very edge of audibility. To the post-war German firebrand avant-garde, Karajan was a hate figure, and Lachenmann has spoken of his discomfort with homogenised orchestral sounds and culture – indeed, his work stands as a critique of everything the Berlin Philharmonic might normally be thought to stand for.

'Can I tell you that his music won everyone in the orchestra over? I wish I could!' Rattle tells me. 'When the string players saw the music for the first time and saw what Lachenmann was asking them to do – the exactness of his instructions about where to place the bow, perhaps on the strings, perhaps on the wooden body of their instruments, or pushing into the strings to create a scraping noise – some of them panicked. They said: this will damage my instrument. But then Helmut arrived at the rehearsal – the most charming man you can imagine – and he patiently explained why he was after these sounds. Not only that, he could also demonstrate the precise sounds he wanted. And he won them over. This is not music through which to demonstrate warm vibrato, like Schumann's, but it opens up string timbre in really a magical way. The canvas of tradition is present; the ghost of Classical form is audibly there. But Lachenmann fills this canvas with dust, instead of clear line and harmony. He is Germany's greatest composer and it's absolutely right that the Berlin Philharmonic engage with his challenges.'

PHOTOS MONIKA RITTERSHAUS

OUT OF THE SHADOW

Two singularly gifted cellists, born 70 years ago, died in the prime of their lives. Yet while Jacqueline du Pré's story entered classical music legend, the career of German cellist Anja Thauer is only now emerging from obscurity. **Tully Potter** assesses her life and recorded legacy

This year marks the 70th anniversaries of the birth of two uniquely talented women cellists whose careers were cut off in tragic circumstances. The life of Jacqueline du Pré is being celebrated all over the world, as expected. But Anja Thauer is forgotten except by cello fanatics and record collectors, among whom her original LPs change hands for four-figure sums. In 1973, when multiple sclerosis forced du Pré to retire and Thauer committed suicide, du Pré had already enjoyed almost a decade of fame, while Thauer was still building her career.

Anja Heidi Thauer was born on 3 July 1945 in the old Hanseatic port of Lübeck. This historic city was the target of the first major RAF bombing raid in March 1942 and a firestorm destroyed much of it, so it was not an attractive place to bring up a child. At any rate, Anja began her music lessons in Braunschweig, some 160 miles to the south, and grew up in Erlangen, attending the Hochschule für Musik in nearby Nuremberg. Friends speak of a lonely childhood and a strict, domineering, pushy, exploitative mother. She played violin–cello duets with her mother in public at the age of 12, performed the Boccherini–Grützmacher B flat major Concerto at her orchestral debut in Baden-Baden, aged 13, and at 14 entered Ludwig Hoelscher's Stuttgart Hochschule masterclass; he was the leading German cellist at that time, a slightly old-fashioned player but a profound musician.

At 15, Thauer went to the Paris Conservatoire on a scholarship to study with André Navarra, and took a course at the École Normale – her father was an engineer with Siemens and it appears that the firm partly funded her Paris sojourn, on which she was joined by her mother. In 1961 she was given the Confederation of German Industry's *Kulturpreis*, at 16 she was appearing on German television and in 1962 she won the Paris Conservatoire's Grand Prix, against strong competition from 21 other students. She was friends with the pianist Claude Françaix, and her playing of the Fantaisie by Claude's famous father, Jean Françaix, had so impressed the pianist–composer that he accompanied her in her final concert as a student. (His music became one of her strongest suits.) At this stage many fellow students thought her a better player than du Pré, who studied briefly with Tortelier around that same time.

Rather than consolidate her musical education, Thauer began touring immediately in Germany, France, Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, Finland, Czechoslovakia and the Near and Far East; her family seem to have relied on her earnings. She made her first LP ▷

Right Anja Thauer in c.1966, the year she recorded the Saint-Saëns Cello Concerto in A minor

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From left to right Anja Thauer at the age of 14; as a student in Paris; and studying a score with conductor Zdeněk Mácal

record for Attacca in 1962. It included the 1899 Cello Concerto by Eugen d'Albert which had been ignored since Feuermann's heyday – her accompanists were the Baden-Baden City Symphony Orchestra under Carl August Vogt – as well as Françaix's *Mouvement perpétuel* and Schubert's Arpeggione Sonata with the fine pianist Maria Bergmann. In 1964 the city of Nuremberg awarded her a *Förderpreis*. In Bamberg that July she made an outstanding disc, sponsored by the Confederation of German Industry and issued in 1966 by Deutsche Grammophon, of Reger's Third Solo Suite and Françaix's Fantaisie – the composer partnered her in his piece – and in Prague in March 1968 she made the DG recording for which she is best remembered: the Dvořák Concerto with the Czech Philharmonic under 32-year-old Zdeněk Mácal. One of only a handful of records that this brilliant Moravian conductor made before his emigration for political reasons, it was supposed to be followed by two more Thauer LPs, but at the time of her death five years later DG had made no further move.

In 1967 and 1969–72 Thauer appeared at least once a year in Britain, but most of the concerts were fairly low-key. On 7 November 1967, at the German Institute in London, she played Boccherini's Adagio and Allegro, Reger's Third Solo Suite, Schubert's Arpeggione, Debussy's Sonata and a work by Martinů with pianist G. Shanahan; on 17 April 1969 she was back at this venue with Rudolf Macudzinski, playing sonatas by Locatelli, Beethoven and Strauss and Françaix's Fantaisie; on 30 October 1970 she performed the Boccherini–Grützmacher in Liverpool with the RLPO under Martin Turnovský; and on 25 March 1971 she made what was billed as her London debut in the cavernous acoustic of St John's Smith Square with pianist Alexander Kelly (Paul Hamburger had been announced). The programme consisted of her usual Boccherini, Reger (just the Prelude), Schubert, Strauss and Françaix. Stephen Walsh wrote in *The Times*.

> Miss Thauer's performance was that of a confirmed extrovert. Her tone seemed enormous (even allowing for the building), and she was clearly reluctant to subside into any accompanimental role – which Schubert, for one, occasionally requires of the 'cellist' in his Arpeggione Sonata. Technically, she was impressive, particularly in this Schubert, with its extended high passage-work on the A-string, but also in Reger's rather discursive Prelude for solo cello. And one was glad of the rare opportunity to hear Strauss's early Sonata, a fine and characteristic work whose bold, neo-Brahmsian romanticism suited Miss Thauer down to the ground.

The programme was repeated at the Goethe Institute in Manchester, and in October she was at the Wexford Festival. In 1972 Thauer toured with the English Sinfonia under Neville Dilkes, playing the Haydn D major Concerto.

It is difficult to avoid the impression that despite Thauer's talent and high level of culture – her chief interests outside music were painting and philosophy – her career was not going anywhere very fast. She visited Italy in 1972 but never ventured across the Atlantic and she played quite a restricted repertoire, although she did become known for Britten's *Cello Symphony*: she gave two performances of it in Vienna in April 1971 with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra under Günther Wich. She worked with some excellent ensembles, touring in 1968 with Vilmos Tátrai and his Hungarian Chamber Orchestra and playing concertos with the Württemberg Chamber Orchestra of Heilbronn under Jörg Faerber, but she never appeared with the Berlin Philharmonic or in the prestigious Frankfurt Museum Concerts. 'I heard her in the 1970s in Kassel and it was fine playing,' violist Hartmut Lindemann told me.

At some stage in the early 1970s this lonely woman, starved of affection since her childhood and never able to have a life of her own, began an affair with a married doctor in the city of Wiesbaden, west of Frankfurt. His wife, apparently very jealous, would certainly not have granted him a divorce. In October 1973 he broke off the affair and on the 18th of that month Thauer committed suicide at her home in Sonnenbergerstrasse, Wiesbaden. Five days later her appalled lover killed himself. Rumours of a suicide pact appear to be unfounded. Little about the double suicide appeared even in the German press – there was nothing in the Wiesbaden papers, I am told – and Thauer's passing caused hardly a ripple in international musical circles.

Recently the tide has turned. In Japan, Tower Records released a CD with all her DG material; and in Germany, Wolfgang Smitmans of Bremen began issuing CDs of her radio recordings on his Hastedt label. Three have appeared so far, the first also including the Dvořák Concerto from DG. The earliest performances are from 1962, with the slightly reticent pianist Helmut Schultes: ▹

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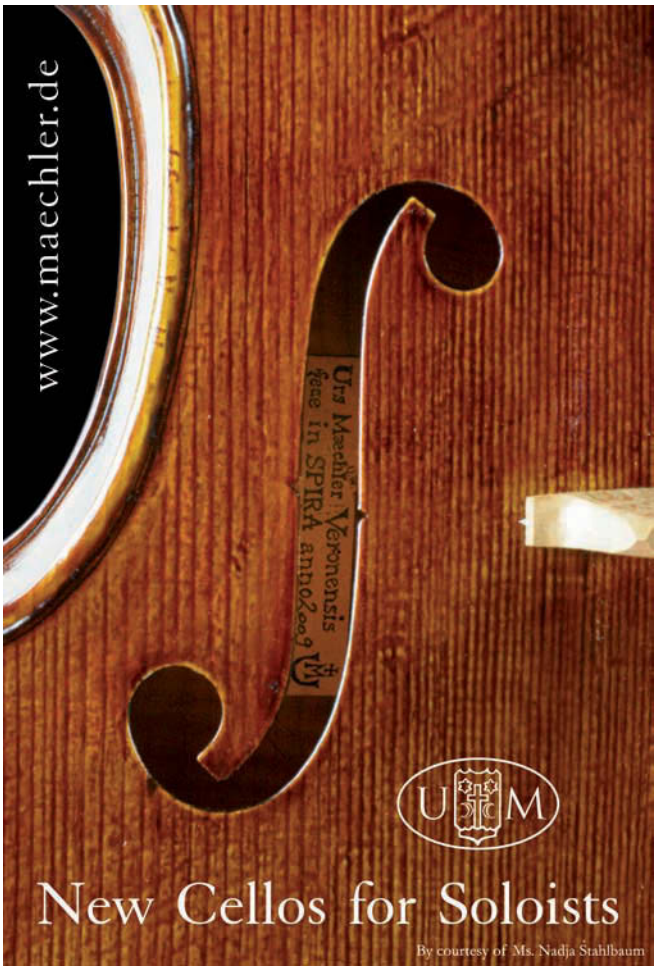
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Delannoy's *Esquisse lyrique* and Debussy's Sonata are well-schooled interpretations, assuredly played by Thauer. From 1963 comes Chopin's Sonata with Claude Français, and from the pianist's first notes you know this is going to be a bit special. It is a marvellous partnership: both young ladies play sensitively and the performance is hugely enjoyable. I have not heard the early LP but a 1964 radio version of Schubert's Arpeggione with Walter Bohle is very likeable: Thauer produces interesting tone colours at easy tempos and the whole interpretation is a model of Viennese *Gemütlichkeit*.

The two 1964 DG performances are superb and I have long loved them. Françaix's Fantaisie starts with quiet piano playing from the composer, and there is very high writing for the cello in this Prelude. The Écossaise brings delightful rhythm and wit from both players. The heart of the Fantaisie is the Élégie, lightly but profoundly played. The scherzo is great fun and leads straight into the substantial finale, with alternating fizzy and serious episodes. Both Jean Françaix and Thauer play superbly, and the fact that her intonation falters slightly, just before the end, underlines that it is a real performance. In the Reger Solo Suite there is a deeply felt start to the Prelude: it is a very inward reading, with fine tone and total technical security. Thauer displays a light touch and fine rhythm in the scherzo, with a lyrical trio. The theme of the variations is beautifully and warmly played and each variation is nicely characterised, up to the quiet ending. A radio performance from the same year has the cello more forward and all three movements slightly faster, but equally well played.

A Schumann Concerto from 1965 is not too well recorded and given a mediocre accompaniment by Klauspeter Seibel, but Thauer's lyrical view of the piece is delivered with glowing tone – a promising interpretation that should have been commercially recorded. From 1966 comes a Saint-Saëns A minor Concerto which is very successful. Thauer goes at the music with huge enthusiasm and excellent technique, producing splendid tone throughout. From the following year we have Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations*, well paced and fluently delivered by Thauer.

The DG Dvořák Concerto has always been among my favourites. Mácal sets an excellent tempo for the Allegro and Thauer plays with a big, bold tone, very secure technically and achieving real *Innigkeit* in the duet with the flute. Like du Pré, she employs a lot of portamento, which is especially noticeable in an Adagio that opens with some beautiful Czech wind playing. She moves beautifully through the faster central section and ends the movement with a real pianissimo. The orchestra establishes an irresistible rhythm at the opening to the finale and again Thauer is absolutely secure, playing with warmth in the slower episodes. The ending is magical. The critic Edward Greenfield described this performance as 'earthily energetic' and it has generally had a good press – DG gave it an LP reissue on the Heliodor label.

Martinů's *Rossini Variations* from 1969 are dispatched by Thauer and Maria Bergmann with wit, virtuosity and understanding. I hope this performance, as well as the Arpeggione, will be issued by Hastedt. Three 1969 recordings, the sonatas by Richard Strauss and Shostakovich and the Françaix Fantaisie, come from a single Radio Bremen recital with Rudolf Macudzinski: a few tiny intonational blemishes from the cellist do not detract from spontaneous performances that are well interpreted. The final tape is of d'Albert's Concerto, with the Stuttgart RSO sympathetically conducted in 1972 by Räto Tschupp. The work is not a masterpiece but is compactly constructed, pleasantly Romantic in style and very effective in the hands of a Feuermann or a Thauer. She plays magnificently.

How should we assess Thauer? I suspect her 'soloist or nothing' attitude, presumably fostered by her mother, hampered her career – one or two well-chosen chamber music affiliations would have broadened her scope and her appeal. But it is inescapable that Jacqueline du Pré's success made life difficult for other female cellists. Comparisons between the two are largely irrelevant, as Thauer played much repertoire that du Pré did not touch, but Thauer is clearly superior in the Dvořák Concerto and, given better luck and a less stormy private life, might well have carved out a significant career. As it was, she seemed destined to become the cello equivalent of Jenny Abel (and if you do not know who Jenny Abel is, you prove my point).

Cello fanciers should seek out Anja Thauer's CDs, perhaps starting with the disc of Saint-Saëns, Chopin, d'Albert and Tchaikovsky. The Japanese CD is a must if you can obtain it, but if not, the Dvořák sounds equally good on Hastedt. We must hope for her Beethoven op.5 no.2, Mendelssohn *Variations concertantes*, Schumann *Five Pieces*, Martinů *Rossini Variations*, Schubert Arpeggione and Falla *Spanish Dance*. And surely some radio station has her playing the Britten *Cello Symphony*.

ANJA THAUER ON CD

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Reger Solo Cello Suite op.131c no.3 (studio 1964)
Françaix Fantaisie (studio 1964)
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Strauss Cello Sonata (radio 1969)
Françaix Fantaisie (radio 1969)
Reger Solo Cello Suite op.131c no.3 (radio 1964)
Shostakovich Cello Sonata (radio 1969)
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Saint-Saëns Cello Concerto in A minor (radio 1966)
D'Albert Cello Concerto (radio 1972)
Chopin Cello Sonata in G minor op.65 (radio 1963)
Tchaikovsky Variations on a Rococo Theme (radio 1967)
HASTEDT HT 6606

Dvořák Cello Concerto (studio 1968)
Delannoy Esquisse lyrique (radio 1962)
Schumann Cello Concerto (radio 1965)
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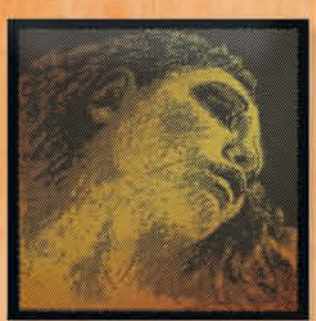
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Making its mark

From a formative guild of emigrés to world-conquering mass production, few places have as colourful a lutherie story to tell as Markneukirchen. **Enrico Weller** and **William Wisehart** assess the history and distinctive character of violin making in this corner of southern Saxony

When in 1677 Moritz, Duke of Saxony, released an edict establishing a new guild for luthiers in a small town on the border of his domain, his concern was economics, not artistry. In endeavouring to redevelop a dukedom depopulated several decades earlier by the violence of the Thirty Years War and associated outbreaks of plague, he was addressing a question which has become urgently contemporary: how can political refugees be turned into valuable assets of the society that is their new home?

Those luthiers could have been considered idealists. As Bible-reading Protestants fleeing the latest turn of events in the Counter-Reformation, they had refused to convert back to Catholicism and had been ousted from their homeland in Bohemia. Indeed, the number of luthiers originally licensed by the guild document (**figure 1**, page 50) was itself Biblical: twelve. Having arrived in Saxony, they found survival was now the matter at hand, and the act creating the guild was not just an encouragement but an essential step towards a productive future.

The luthiers had not actually fled very far. They were from the guild in Graslitz, which is in Bohemia but less than five miles from the Saxon border. Their new guild was in Neukirchen, or Markneukirchen as it was later called, only three miles into Saxony on the other side of the border – and Saxony was Protestant. The language and culture on both sides of the border were German, and the luthiers themselves had drafted the guild statutes that the duke had endorsed, a legal framework that enabled them to train apprentices, journeymen and *Meister* tradesmen, thereby ensuring high standards of ▹

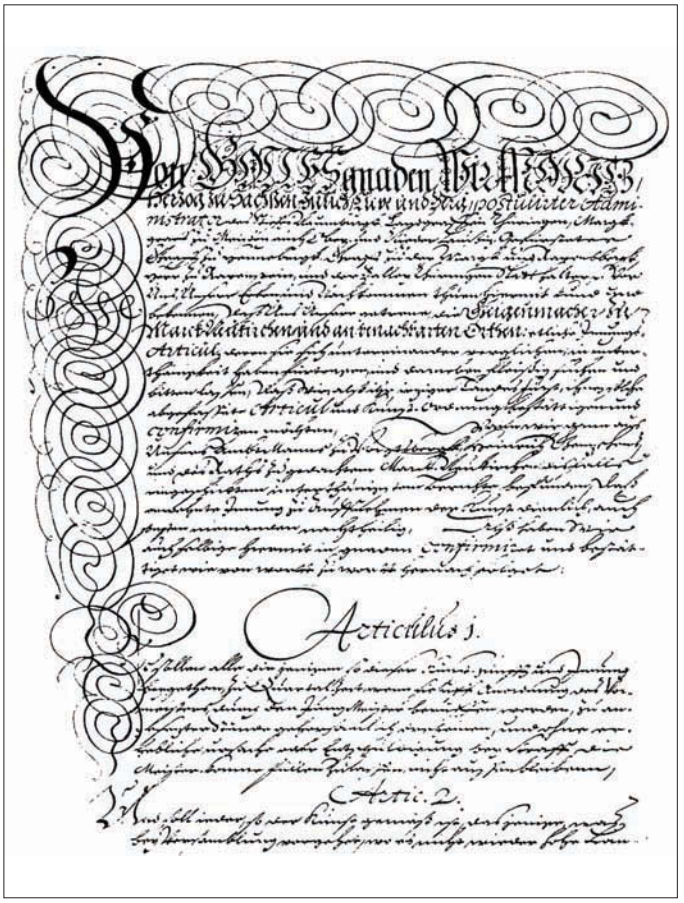






Figure 1 The original Markneukirchen guild document

Figure 2 Detail of an open violin by Johann Gottfried Hamm

Figure 3 Interior of a 1799 violin by Carl Wilhelm Glaesel showing the neck on a raised plateau

workmanship. The guild also governed the number of licensed masters, so that all could earn a decent living. As time went on the Markneukirchen guild members became astoundingly prolific.

The duke's foresight is greatly to be admired: two centuries later, thousands of craftsmen on both sides of the Saxon–Bohemian border were producing half of the world's demand for stringed instruments. The area had become a global supplier of many other musical instruments as well, and was known as the *Musikwinkel* or music 'nook', of Germany – partly because of the way the Saxon border wiggles around the hills there. The duke's support surely reflected what must have been his own sensitivity to the artistry of violin making, and how the business could influence society as a whole. In the late 17th century, trade was becoming more important. A growing middle class was not only demanding increasing numbers of items involving skilled craftsmanship and more advanced technology – and indeed producing them – but it was also becoming more educated. It was thus a fast-growing market for art and music, and so artistry became a determining factor of south-east Saxony's economic growth.

The skills and ingenuity of Markneukirchen's original twelve luthiers (see box, page 55) were developed by subsequent generations in a tradition that is well documented up to the present day. Less clear are the origins of violin making in the founding guild members' former home of Graslitz. Church archives show that the first makers were there in the early 1600s, just after copper was discovered and an economic boom caused the population to grow from 500 to 6,000. There was a wealthy silver-mining area 100 miles to the north-east, in the same Erzgebirge mountain range as Graslitz. Violins and bows had been made in this area in great numbers since at least a hundred years earlier than in Graslitz. Some were placed into the hands of the angels gracing the burial chapel in the cathedral of Freiberg in Saxony, and those have been admirably preserved. The inner labels show that they were made ten miles south of Freiberg in the 1500s, in or near Randeck. Replicas are now on display at the Museum for Musical Instruments of the University of Leipzig.

The migration of violin makers from Randeck to Graslitz is conjecture, for which no direct evidence remains. However, there is a clear link between miners and violin making. Many future generations of makers on both sides of the Saxon–Bohemian border had family names that came from mining. Hoyer, spelt Hauer in modern German, means 'beater' or hammerer, and Klier, today spelt Glüher, means 'glower', the person in charge of the glowing hot coals for extracting metal from ore.

Furthermore, Randeck violins and early Markneukirchen violins do indeed share many

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ARTISTRY BECAME A DETERMINING FACTOR OF SOUTH-EAST SAXONY'S ECONOMIC GROWTH

of the same characteristics, but these are also to be found in 17th-century Flemish instruments and in the Alemannic tradition of the southern Black Forest. They are attributes of what is now recognised as a distinct school of violin making which typified Markneukirchen instruments until far into the 19th century, some of which are described below.

In recent years, there has been thorough research into historical violin making north of the Alps. The makers in this part of Europe produced the violins of Bach's era, supplying instruments to the string ensembles of Lutheran churches in hundreds of towns and cities. 'North Alpine' craftsmanship has been a focus of studies by Olaf Paulisch, André Mehler and Karoline Meinel under the direction of professor Andreas Michel at the Markneukirchen-based musical instrument making department of the Zwickau University of Applied Sciences. Their research has dispelled the oft-cited notion that Markneukirchen was exclusively oriented towards the Stainer school of makers, from the Tyrolean part of Austria. Many Markneukirchen violins did have the high arches typical of Stainer's work, but many did not. Indeed, the most common trait seems to be the variety of individual approaches to the shape of a violin, and each family of makers tended to have their own models.

As a counterpoint to these studies, over the past six years Markneukirchen maker Ekkard Seidl has documented some 250 historical instruments from the area. He has also used dendrochronology to date the instrument top plates, and has identified wood used in violins of different makers which came from the same tree.

All this research, and the handed-down maker traditions in Markneukirchen, bears witness to violin making methods that may surprise makers elsewhere. The ribs were set up with a freehand method called *frei aufschachteln*. No mould was used and the work was often done without corner-blocks, and sometimes even without liners. The neck and upper block were one single piece of wood. **Figure 2** shows an open violin made by Johann Gottfried Hamm (1744–1817): the ribs are inserted directly into the neck, and anchored there with small wooden wedges. The neck clearly extends into the violin body and is glued on to a 'plateau' carved up out of the bottom plate. Traces of the tools used on the ribs are still visible. **Figure 3** is an inside view of the 1799 violin shown on page 53, which was made by Carl Wilhelm Glaesel (1770–1855): there is not only a lower plateau but an upper one as well, although not as prominent, to which the neck is also glued.

The in-curved sides of the neck root, between the button and the fingerboard, are very characteristic of Markneukirchen violins. **Figure 4** shows how the ▹

Figure 4 Neck root of a 1783 J.F. Hoyer violin. The shape of the neck at its base is very typical of Markneukirchen violins

Figure 5 F-hole of the Glaesel violin shown in figure 3

ALL INSTRUMENT PHOTOS EKKARD SEIDL

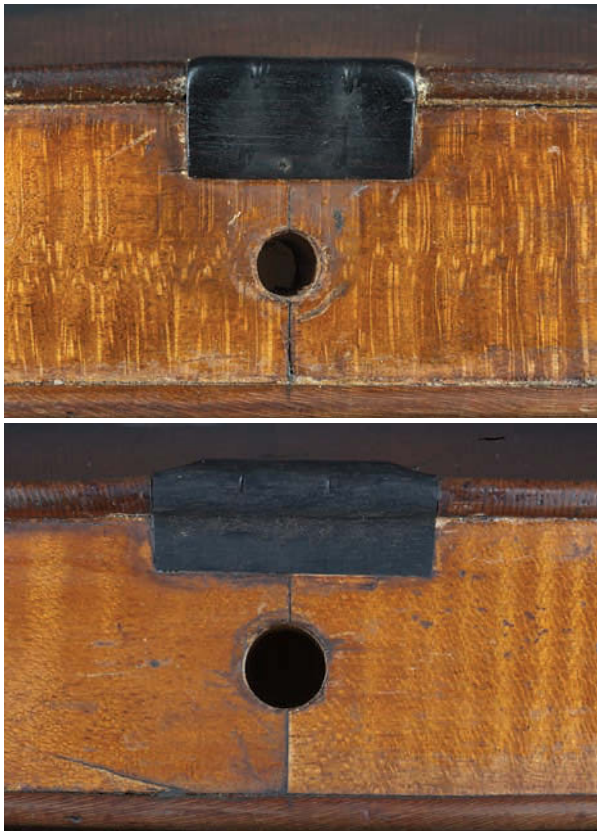


Figure 6 Note how the lower saddle intrudes on the ribs in these instruments by J. G. Schönfelder (above) and C. C. Hoyer (below)

6



Body of the Carl Wilhelm Glaesel violin shown in figures 3 and 5

neck root has been shaped on a 1783 violin by Johann Friedrich Hoyer (1738–1815). The style of the f-holes can be seen in the Glaesel violin in **figure 5** (page 51): note the bevelling on the wings, about 1.5mm wide. The lower saddle was often larger than on modern violins, and it protruded right into the ribs and table (see the two examples in **figure 6**). The purfling was sometimes inlaid and sometimes painted in, in high-quality instruments just as much as in lesser ones. On some instruments, the bass-bar was carved right into the violin belly.

Markneukirchen luthiers were aware of other schools of violin making, for according to guild rules, all journeymen were expected to work for master makers in other areas before settling down and becoming master tradesmen themselves, and some chose to spend time in countries far away from home. Even in recent years, apprentices have continued to be taught the traditional methods, alongside the use of moulds and other techniques which are now in common use.

From about 1840 onwards, Markneukirchen became the centre of a monumental violin making operation involving thousands of self-employed, highly skilled craftsmen on both sides of the Saxon–Bohemian border – all dependent on one another yet working independently. Those specialising in individual violin parts were mostly in Bohemia, in and around Schönbach (a few miles south of Graslitz). On the Saxon side of the border, Markneukirchen had better connections to the world market, particularly because of the ports in northern Germany, and so here, makers assembled the parts into complete violins for wholesalers who shipped them around the world. Some violins were sold in such high numbers that their prices were quoted by the dozen.

Markneukirchen acquired a reputation for second-rate instruments, and a discussion began about whether or not the makers there were capable of producing violins suitable for virtuoso playing. The result was that some 250 makers located in the major cities all over Germany felt a need to set themselves apart from the *Duzendgeigen* or 'dozen violins' coming out of Markneukirchen. The term *Kunstgeigenbau*, or 'art violin making', came into use as a distinguisher. Yet the vast majority of these luthiers were dependent on their Markneukirchen suppliers for parts, supplies, and indeed whole instruments.

By the end of the 19th century more than 150,000 violins and 400,000 bows were being produced there every year. All were essentially made by hand. More than 50 per cent of the global demand for all types of ▷

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FOUNDING FATHERS

The first members of the Markneukirchen guild included the originators of important violin making dynasties. The initiator and first *Obermeister* of the guild was **Christian Reichel** (1631–97), whose family would number more than 60 master makers. **Caspar Hopf** (c.1650–1711) was another founding member, and the first of eight generations of violin makers. His descendants founded another violin guild in Klingenthal, a few miles away, in 1716. The **Schönfelder** dynasty, beginning in 1658, was the earliest family of makers in Markneukirchen. Four of the family were founding members of the guild.

Numerous other violin making families made names for themselves in the 18th and early 19th centuries, among them the **Ficker**, **Glass**, **Glaesel**, **Gütter**, **Hamm**, **Hammig**, **Heberlein**, **Hoyer**, **Lorenz**, **Schuster** and **Voigt** families.

Opposite Body of the Johann Friedrich Hoyer violin shown in figure 4
Gallery Scroll of the Hoyer violin; scroll of the Glaesel violin shown on page 52; body and scroll of a 1777 violin by Johann Christian Schuster (1753–1820)

stringed instruments was met by Markneukirchen, and 90 per cent of the market for strings – the gut came from all over Europe, and from Odessa and Tashkent. Of Markneukirchen's population of around 8,000, dozens were millionaires. The United States put a consular office in the middle of the town to handle the customs paperwork for what amounted to two-thirds of the entire US imports of musical instruments. Such mass production required immense quantities of wood and parts. These were available in differing grades of quality, and in around 1870 some Markneukirchen luthiers decided to use better components and market 'art violins' themselves, thus gaining freedom from the ruthless downward price pressure of Markneukirchen wholesalers. These luthiers established brand names which they anchored worldwide with catalogues featuring a wide range of styles and prices. 'Italian' models were in vogue; shaped and varnished to look Italian, and bearing Italian facsimile inner labels, yet made using the traditional Markneukirchen construction techniques. Some prominent makers of this type were Heinrich Ludwig Glaesel Jr. (1842–1922), Heinrich Theodor Heberlein Jr. (1843-1909), Arnold Voigt (1864–1952), Ernst Heinrich Roth (1877–1948), Adolf Paul Dörfel (1878–1967) and Paul Knorr (1882–1977).

In 1914 the First World War abruptly terminated the golden age of Markneukirchen. The economic depression that came after the war prevented the violin market from reaching its former level, although in spite of this some of the 'art violin' luthiers (such as those just mentioned) experienced their own golden age in the 1920s and 30s. Some of their work is documented by Bruce Babbitt in his book *Markneukirchen Violins and Bows*, which followed his exhibition of late 19th- and early 20th-century instruments and bows at the 2012 Violin Society of America convention.

After the Second World War and the fall of the Iron Curtain, Markneukirchen was in East Germany, cut off from the West. Schönbach, known as Luby in Czech, was in Czechoslovakia, and the German-speaking Schönbach makers and their families were required to leave the country. After many trying experiences as fugitives in various places, 2,000 Schönbach makers ended up in Bubenreuth, in northern Bavaria, where they started making stringed instruments again. Bubenreuth's production soon far outstripped Markneukirchen's. Decades later Germany reunited, but by this time mass violin making had moved to Asia. However, the legacy of Saxon–Bohemian violin making lives on in the crafting of medium-range and high-quality instruments in Markneukirchen and Bubenreuth, where prize-winning luthiers have clients who play in major orchestras around the world.

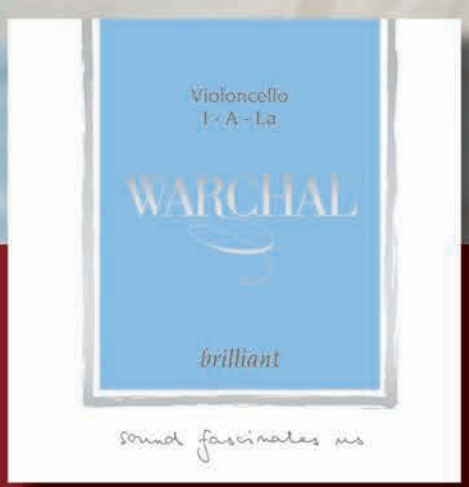
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Leonard Rose held every aspect of cello playing in perfect equilibrium. His elegant bowing arm and unblemished tone created the illusion of seamless phrasing, unaffected by the need for bow-change. This microcosmic precision extended to an unusually flexible left hand that, due largely to Rose's meticulous concert preparation, created the strange impression of moving effortlessly around the fingerboard as if by remote control. His distinguished pupil Stephen Kates described him as having a 'beautiful and natural way of playing' with a particular interest in 'instrumental finesse, tone colour, expression, lyricism'.

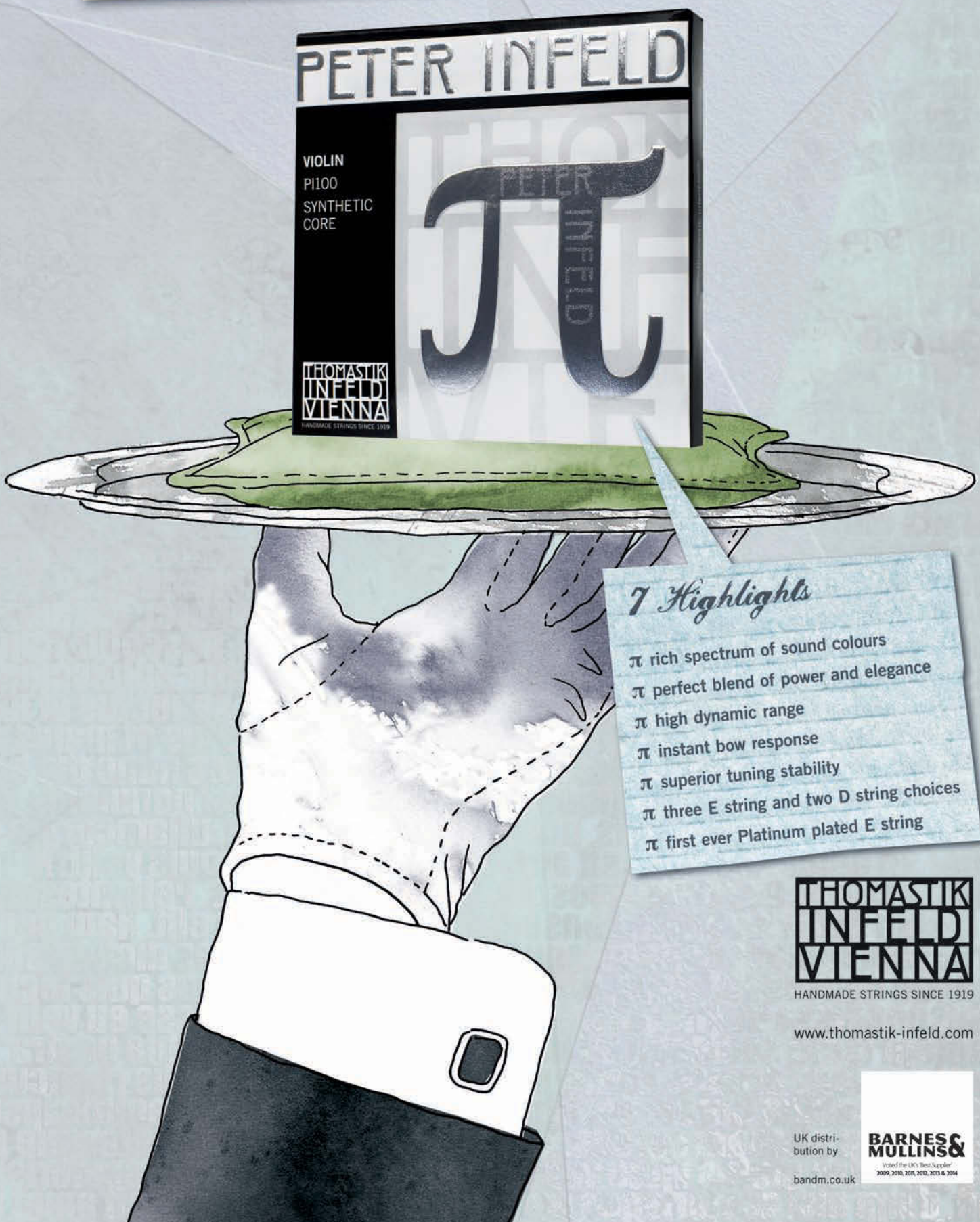
PEDAGOGICAL BACKGROUND

Rose was introduced to the cello by his father before starting formal lessons at the Miami Conservatory with Walter Grossman, who instilled in him the importance of a flexible, curved bowing thumb. Moving to Philadelphia on Felix Salmond's advice, he next underwent six intensive months with Rose's cousin Frank Miller, then only 19 and a back-desker with the Philadelphia Orchestra, before becoming principal with the Minneapolis, NBC and Chicago symphony orchestras. It was Miller who introduced Rose to a lifelong technical bedrock – David Popper's *Hohe Schule des Violoncellospiels* (High School of Cello Playing).

Meanwhile, Rose had won a scholarship to study at the Curtis Institute with Salmond, whose lack of virtuoso technique was more than compensated for by his radiant tone and natural musicianship. Remarkably, Rose played not a single scale or etude to Salmond during their four years of study together, yet the experience proved crucial in shaping his sound world and playing style. Such was Rose's own profound impact as a teacher, inspired initially by violin guru Ivan Galamian's example, that at one point 22 of his pupils could be found in the various cello sections of the Philadelphia, Cleveland, New York Philharmonic and Boston Symphony orchestras. ▹

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TECHNIQUE AND INTERPRETATIVE STYLE

Rose felt that every element of cello playing – from bowing and vibrato, to tone production and phrasing – had to be constantly gauged and rigorously maintained. His bowing action, based on a figure-of-eight circular motion, was consciously modelled on Kreisler's example and developed specifically to coax rather than force the sound out of his instrument. His bowing hand was also unusually flexible, with the little finger left gently caressing the frog rather than sitting on top of the stick as a counterbalance. Essential to his (when appropriate) inaudible bow changes and myriad subtleties of articulation was an unusually supple bent thumb, which also helped generate his burnished sound.

Blessed with perfect pitch, he was sensitive to the focal centre of each note, with the fall of each left-hand finger micro-managed and (especially for the period) surprisingly free of portamento. He kept his left forearm relaxed to facilitate a wide range of vibrato, achieved by pivoting on the pads of the fingers. Rather than moving his body around a stationary instrument, he tended subtly to vary the cello's playing angle and position in order to maintain continuity of contact across all four strings.

Rose's concentrated stage presence and composure was harnessed by focusing the first part of his career on orchestral playing at the highest level, initially with the NBC Symphony Orchestra under Toscanini and then the Cleveland and New York Philharmonic. One thing he never conquered, however, was appalling bouts of pre-concert nerves, making the exceptional consistency of his concert performances all the more remarkable.

SOUND

Rose produced an unusually full and direct sound of unblemished beauty, with a strong bass foundation. Neither overtly sensual nor self-consciously beguiling, he always maintained an exceptionally even tone throughout the range, which allowed him to segue from bass to soprano registers with unrivalled ease. He also obtained an unusually broad range of tone colours, subtly micro-inflecting his phrasing so that in slow-moving passages almost every note possessed its own unique identity.

STRENGTHS

In his core 19th-century repertoire, Rose had few peers. His scintillating technique and tonal clarity proved an ideal match for the Saint-Saëns A minor Concerto, while his jewelled precision and ability to tame his sound also made him an ideal chamber music partner, most notably in the 'million dollar' piano trio he formed with violinist Isaac Stern and pianist Eugene Istomin. He had very little webbing in his hands, so that although they were only of average size (Rose stood at 5 feet 8 inches), they allowed him to make stretches and extensions often closed to players with larger hands – especially useful in a physically challenging work such as the Dvořák Concerto. His recorded interpretations are models of musical elegance and refinement.

WEAKNESSES

In a sense Rose had no weaknesses – indeed his playing career was dedicated to eradicating technical compromise in order to facilitate interpretations of exceptional purity, free of bogus interpretative rhetoric or self-aggrandising artistic temperament. That said, he rarely let himself off the leash to allow himself to live for the moment.

INSTRUMENTS AND BOWS

Earlier in his career Rose played a 1693 Matteo Gofriller cello, once owned by Alfredo Piatti and now on loan to the distinguished German virtuoso Leonard Elschenbroich. However, Rose's principal instrument was a Nicolò Amati dating from 1662, whose provenance has been dated back to Tsar Nicholas II and the ▹

CHRONOLOGY

1918
Born in Washington DC

1928
Begins lessons with Walter Grossman

1934
Wins scholarship to the Curtis Institute and studies with Felix Salmond

1938
Appointed associate principal of the NBC Symphony under Toscanini (until 1939)

1939
Appointed principal of the Cleveland Orchestra (until 1943)

1943
Joins the New York Philharmonic (from 1944 as principal, until 1951)



Rose played with an unusually full and direct sound of unblemished beauty

RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

Bach: Viola da Gamba Sonatas
SONY 88697148332

Beethoven: Complete Piano Trios; Triple Concerto
SONY 88697826772

Beethoven & Brahms: Piano Trios
EUROARTS 3073994 (BLU-RAY)

Brahms: Complete Piano Trios; Double Concerto
SONY 88843061362

Dvořák: Cello Concerto
SONY SBK 46337

Lalo/Tchaikovsky/Fauré/Bloch
SONY SBK 48278

Mendelssohn: Piano Trios
SONY SMK 64519

Saint-Saëns/Bloch/Tchaikovsky
BIDDULPH BID 80209

Live in Recital: 1953–1960
VAI VAIA1261-2

cellist and music patron Count Mateusz Wielhorski, and is currently played by the Canadian-born virtuoso Gary Hoffman. One of Rose's favourite modern bows was made for him by his former pupil William Salchow.

REPERTOIRE AND RECORDINGS

With the notable exception of William Schuman's *A Song of Orpheus*, Rose focused his playing career almost exclusively on the 19th-century repertoire. His first major recording, featuring Villa-Lobos's *Bachiana brasileira* no.5, with fellow members of the New York Philharmonic cello section and soprano Bidu Sayão (1945), went on to become a bestseller. Columbia (CBS) subsequently contracted him as an exclusive artist in 1951, which helped launch his solo career (and allowed him to pay off the loan on his trusty Gofriller). Rose was now at the peak of his powers and the series of sonata recordings he made around this time with pianist Leonid Hambro (most notably works by Grieg, Schubert and Franck, now collectors' items), capture his artistry at white heat. So too his earlier mono accounts of the Saint-Saëns A minor Concerto, Bloch's *Schelomo* and Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations* with Dimitri Mitropoulos and George Szell (available on Biddulph).

A long-deleted double album on Pearl, entitled *The Memorial Edition*, features largely live recordings from the 1940s, most importantly a fine account of a work he never recorded commercially: Strauss's *Don Quixote* with George Szell and the New York Philharmonic. A 1950s collection of live, piano-accompanied performances captured at the Frick Collection (mostly) and the Library of Congress on VAI is also well worth tracking down. Rose's stereo concerto recordings (mostly with Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra) exchange the zeal of the 1940s and 50s for a more calmly considered approach, but they are also vastly better engineered, and Ormandy's accompaniments are (as always) exemplary.

For richly upholstered, impassioned readings in the Romantic tradition, the Rose–Stern–Istomin trio was virtually in a class apart. Its sound-only recordings of the Beethoven, Brahms, Mendelssohn and Schubert trios are still among the finest of their kind, and fortunately the Brahms and Beethoven cycles were also captured on film (EuroArts). VAI also has a fine DVD coupling of the Beethoven C minor and Brahms C major trios dating from 1965, and Sony has an unforgettable 1961 account of Beethoven's A major Cello Sonata with Glenn Gould.

TULLY POTTER COLLECTION

1944
Makes concerto debut in Carnegie Hall with the New York Philharmonic

1947
Appointed professor at the Juilliard School (until his death)

1951
Embarks on solo career

1951
Appointed professor at the Curtis Institute (stays until 1962)

1982
Final commercial recording – Brahms sonatas with Jean-Bernard Pommier

1984
Dies in White Plains, Westchester, NY



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PIETER ROMBOUTS

WRITTEN BY HUBERT DE LAUNAY

Born in 1667, Pieter Rombouts presumably began his lutherie training soon after his mother married violin maker Hendrik Jacobs on 4 July 1676. His craftsmanship is evident in Jacobs's instruments from around 1685 onwards, particularly in the scrolls. Over the years, Rombouts contributed to more and more of the instruments that left the Jacobs workshop, and most of the cellos are entirely made by him. Because of the way the two makers distributed their work, it can be hard to attribute an instrument entirely to either one of them. Rombouts took over the workshop in 1704 when Jacobs died. The Jacobs–Rombouts workshop existed in Amsterdam for nearly 80 years and Rombouts continued working until his own death in 1728.

Rombouts's work includes violins, violas, cellos, and six- and seven-string violas da gamba. Two beautiful festoon-shaped pochettes have also been found in recent years.

- MAKER
PIETER ROMBOUTS
- NATIONALITY
DUTCH
- BORN
1667
- DIED
1728
- INSTRUMENT
VIOLIN
- DATE
c.1710

INSTRUMENT

This c.1710 violin, which still retains its original neck, is part of the collection of the Dutch National Musical Instrument Foundation. It is in excellent condition and shows Rombouts's characteristic and experienced hand in every part.

ARCHING AND F-HOLES

The arching is high on both the front and back, but is well rounded and precisely executed. The straight-positioned f-holes are confidently cut in the fine-grained spruce front. Some knife cuts are visible on the outer curves. The nicks are carefully positioned, finely cut and rounded off into the stems. There is little fluting in the wings but they end in a very crisp and sharp point around the oval eyes. Most of each f-hole is cut perpendicular to the ribs, but with some undercuts in the top and bottom curve.

CORNERS AND EDGEWORK

The edge rises immediately after the broad inlay in a sharp C-shape. This contrasts with the edgework of Rombouts's corners, which end in a flat triangular point; it looks as though he was using a different gouge from the one he used for the rest of the edgework.

SCROLL

The throat is cut a little high and the pegbox is tapered, which in combination give the scroll a tall and slender look. The eyes are more rounded than those often seen in Rombouts scrolls. Although this scroll has some wear, it remains in very good condition. Even in the pegbox, file marks can still be found under the varnish.

PURFLING

Throughout his working life Rombouts used whalebone purfling, which was widely available in Amsterdam at that time. The colour of the whalebone on this violin varies from black when covered by varnish to a green–grey where it has worn away.

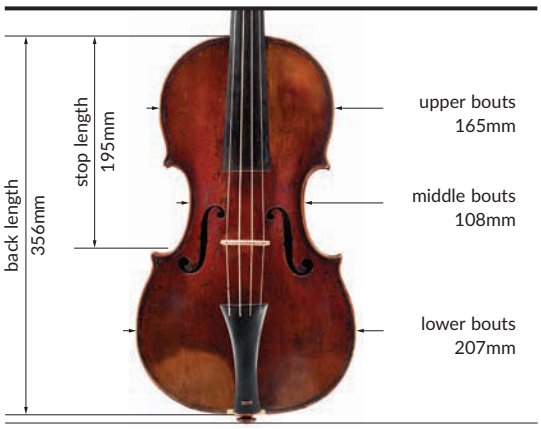
The bee-sting extends from the C-bout inlay, the same way that Rombouts's stepbrother Gijsbert Verbeek inlaid his corners, although Rombouts's mitres run straight through the middle of the corner.

VARNISH

The violin has hardly been polished or retouched over the years, and more than 70 per cent is still covered in Rombouts's signature rich, glowing and transparent red varnish. The thickness of the varnish layer can still be seen on the remarkably flamed maple back. ▹



ALL PHOTOS CATHY LEVESQUE


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stop length
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upper bouts
165mm
middle bouts
108mm
lower bouts
207mm









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Westerlund instrument, violin
Guarnerius del Gesu model



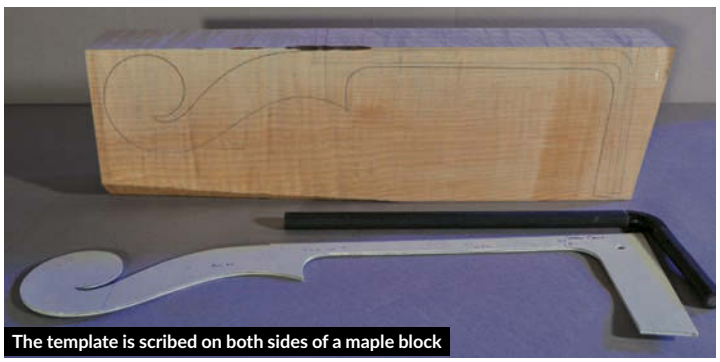
Installing a carbon-fibre reinforcement to a cello neck

An L-shaped beam adds strength to the neck and heel

BY RAYMOND SCHRYER
Luthier based in Sault Ste Marie, Ontario, Canada

I have been installing this one-piece, L-shaped carbon-fibre beam in my new cellos for the past four years, and also in the occasional neck graft for restoration. This beam significantly stiffens the neck and heel, and also raises the B0 mode frequency of the cello neck. The installation procedure described here has allowed me to stabilise the neck projection more effectively than any other method I've tried.

The half-inch cross-section of this beam is D-shaped, with a 2mm-thick carbon-fibre shell. The core is filled with foam. I owe thanks to double bass maker James Ham for introducing the product to me.

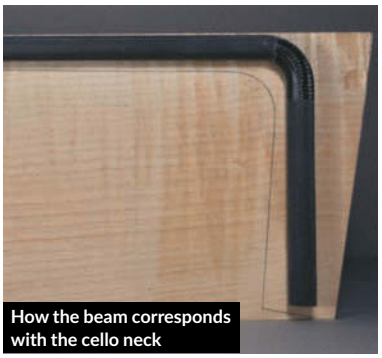


The template is scribed on both sides of a maple block

1 First of all, a maple block is dimensioned and squared for a cello scroll and neck. Then I scribe my template on to both sides. The photo shows the maple block, the template and the carbon-fibre beam itself.

2 This image shows how the beam will eventually fit into the neck. The turn into the heel can be as close as 4–5mm from the throat and 3mm from the thinnest neck surface; note, however, that the measurements of my own template could differ from those of other templates.

Before the following steps, it is crucial for the neck-block to be planed very square.



How the beam corresponds with the cello neck



Making a hole 39mm from the end of the template

3 Using a half-inch brad point drill bit, I start making a 134.5mm-deep hole in the heel, perpendicular to the fingerboard surface, so that there is 39mm from the centre of the hole to the end of the neck. ▹

ALL PHOTOS RAYMOND SCHRYER

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Finishing off the hole with a hand drill

4 I finish the drilling with a hand drill, so that the hole reaches exactly 134.5mm. I cannot reach this depth with the drill press; if I could purchase a longer bit, I would skip this step.


Making a channel in the maple block

5 For the next stage I use an overhead router. A hand-held one can also be used, or a table version with the router mounted underneath. I use a half-inch, square-end router bit, and it is essential to use a fence as well, to centre the cut of the bit.

I make two passes to router a 9.5mm groove in the top of the maple block: the first at a depth of 5mm and the second for the remaining 4.5mm.


A ball-end drill bit is used to complete the channel

6 I change the router bit to a half-inch ball-end, before making a final pass that brings the depth of the channel to 13.3mm. (This allows space for a 1.5mm maple fillet, as shown in step 10.)


A long chisel is used for squaring the hole

7 I square the back of the long hole to fit the D-shaped cross-section of the beam. For this I use a long chisel with a width of 8mm, made from a jointer knife.


The beam ready to be cut to length

8 The beam is manufactured extra long, so I cut it to the length of the neck behind the nut. I like it to be visible in the pegbox, though it can be hidden just beyond the fingerboard by machining a shorter channel. I use a rotary disc to cut it to length, at an angle which matches that of my pegbox. I wear a mask for this stage because of the carbon-fibre dust produced.


Checking the turn with a wooden template

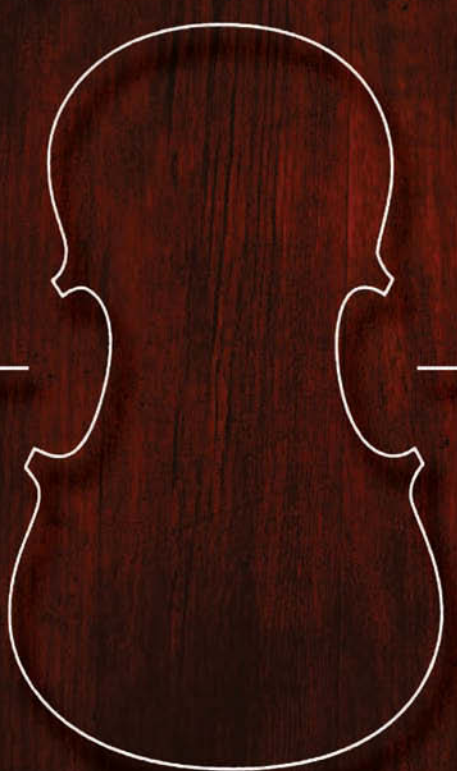
9 I finish making the 90-degree turn in the block, using a wooden template to make sure the curve will fit the beam exactly. Then I use a gouge and finally a small rasp to fit the beam. I also put a nylon string under the beam, ahead of the turn (visible in step 10), which allows me to lift it during the fitting. ▷

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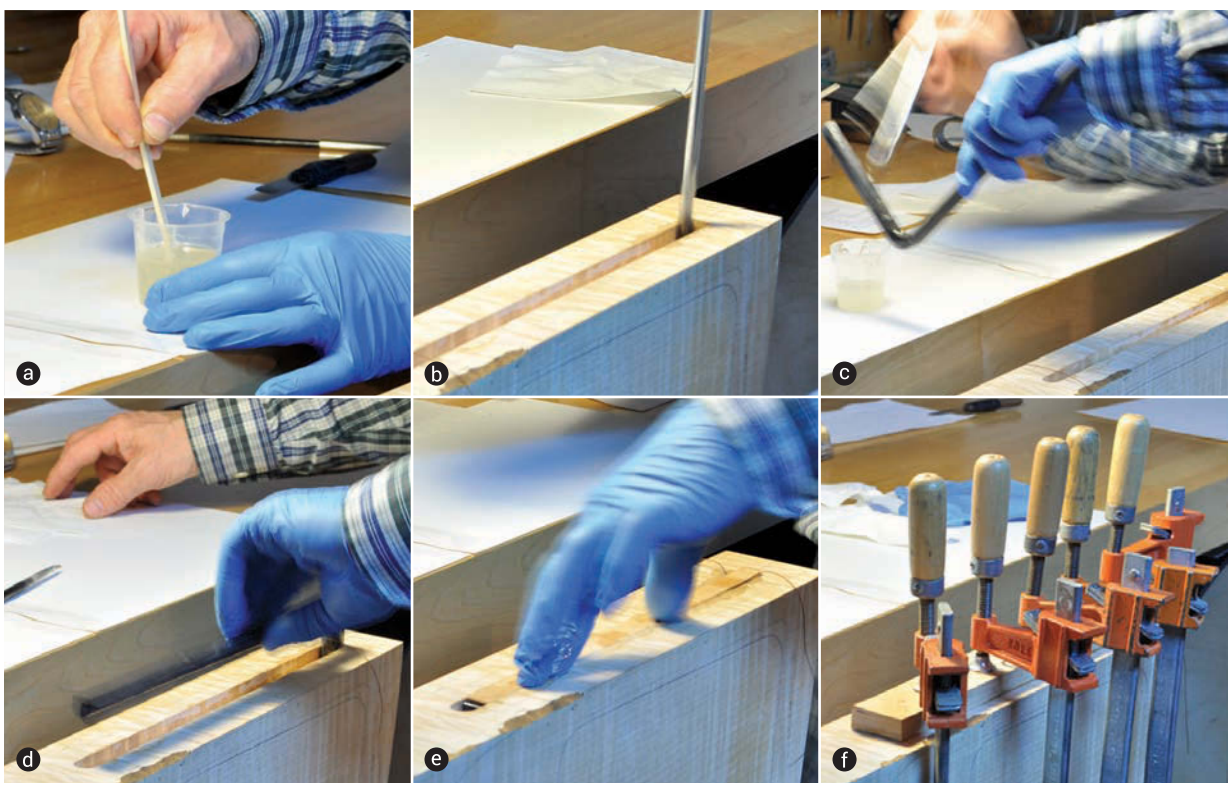
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The beam fits perfectly after adjustments

10 After making some adjustments at the turn of the beam, it is now ready for gluing. The maple fillet shown here is 2mm thick – 0.5mm higher than the block, which allows for clamping pressure. I use a hardwood board covered with clear packing tape for clamping.

Before step 11, I remove the beam from the block.



The gluing process

11 Gluing

I make a mixture of West System 105 epoxy resin and 206 hardener (11a). I brush epoxy generously into the hole and channel, pouring some in with the plastic beaker first (11b). Then I brush epoxy all over the beam (11c). I place the beam in the channel, pressing firmly and then cleaning excess epoxy as it oozes out. The nylon string can be seen under the beam; I have it there in case I need to lift it (11d). After brushing epoxy on the fillet, I place it on top of the beam, fixed towards the heel (11e). Finally I clean up excess epoxy and let it cure for 24 hours, using 4–5 clamps to keep it in place (11f).

NEXT MONTH

Michael Doran on bushing a cello endpin hole

MY SPACE

A peek into lutherie workshops around the world



LUTHIER

ANTON SPRENGER

LOCATION

Mittenwald, Germany

My workshop is situated in Gries, the historic part of Mittenwald, where Matthias Klotz set up his own workshop 330 years ago this year. The building is at least 600 years old and only 4.4m wide. The workshop covers 15 sq m, and I have separate rooms for rough work and storage space plus a small showroom. Musicians test their instruments in the workshop or the showroom; and since this is a tourist area, people often come in to see what a luthier's workshop looks like.

The windows face south-west. Sometimes I get too much direct sunlight, but the days are generally short: sunrise comes late and the sunsets are early because the surrounding mountains block the sun so much.

All the images around the lute are historic family documents. The one at the top left shows my great-grandmother, who was a great-great-granddaughter of Aegidius Klotz (1733–1805). She is surrounded by all her grandchildren, of which my father was the eldest. The picture was taken at the house two doors to the left of mine, which is believed to be the workshop where the violin used by the adult W.A. Mozart was made. On the bench below the lute, I keep my tools and ingredients for making varnish. At the moment I'm working from *The Strad*'s poster of the 1715 'Titian' Stradivari violin, which is folded up on the bench.

On the far wall there are drawings of lion-head scrolls designed by Mittenwald luthier Martin Kriner (1850–1931), who specialised in carving necks. The scrolls on the shelf below the picture are original Kriner carvings.

It's important to me to have music playing while I'm working, to keep a positive atmosphere that doesn't make me feel as if I'm working in a factory. In the mornings I listen to classical music: Monteverdi and Evaristo Felice Dall'Abaco are my current favourites. In the late afternoon my workshop turns into a jazz club. ●

INTERVIEW BY CHRISTIAN LLOYD

This portrait is an original drawing of my great-great-grandfather. His two brothers, Mathias and John Sprenger, were the first recorded violin makers to be based in New York City (1846).



The violin hanging up in the window is the one I play in a local string quartet and in a Bluegrass band called 'The Grieshoppers' – so named because all four of us own shops in Gries.

ALL PHOTOS ANTON SPRENGER

I painted this picture of my friend and fellow luthier Mathias Klotz, a descendant of the founder of violin making here. He died in 2000 aged 93, and I find it inspiring to have him still looking over my shoulder.

Right The red ceiling symbolises the passion and love I have for my work, and reminds me that if I make a good-sounding instrument it will still exist in 300 years' time.





I'm working on a violin body and its neck, which is nearly ready for fitting. I use the asymmetric outline of the 'Cannon' Guarneri 'del Gesù', only slightly enlarged so that the final instrument has a dark, warm, powerful sound.

I keep this box of wood shavings behind my chair for aesthetic purposes: if people come into the shop and see a clean floor, they sometimes ask why I haven't been working that day.

ASK *THE* EXPERTS

Can there be long-term consequences for a bow if a player fails to have it rehaired in a timely fashion? Two bow makers and one supplier of horse hair give their thoughts

QUESTION

My bow probably needs a rehair (there's a tuft of broken hair ends near my frog!), but I've been so busy doing my office job during the day and playing chamber music in the evenings that I haven't had time to get it seen to. Will it harm my bow if I keep playing on it anyway? And what's the longest anyone should go between rehairs – does the hair deteriorate even if it's not being used?

VIGDIS BREKKEN, OSLO, NORWAY



JUTTA WALCHER

Developing a 'tuft' of broken hair ends near the frog is usually the beginning of the end: it is a sign that the hair has worn out and it will continue to break at an ever-increasing rate. This will lead to the stick being pulled over to one side when under playing tension. I have come across bows where the wood has been worn away as a result of a lack of hair on the playing edge – damage that cannot be fixed. When receiving a bow in this condition, I occasionally wonder how the player ever managed to keep going with half of the hair missing!

Watch out for how much the hair has stretched. As the number of the hairs diminishes, the remaining hairs have to take more force when the bow is pulled up to playing tension, so they will be stretched even further. It is worth checking that the gap between the thumb leather and nose of the frog is not too big, otherwise there might be trouble ahead if the brass eye hits the back of the stick mortise.

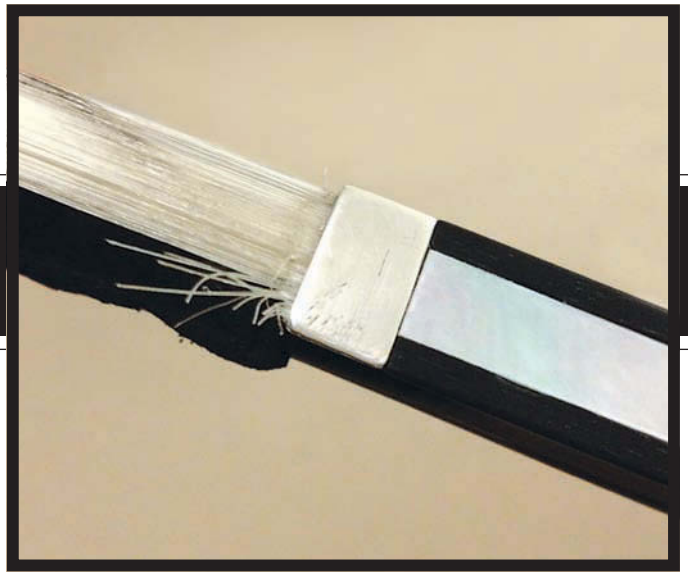
To give an idea of the time frame when a bow should be rehaired, I can only say that it depends on how many hours it was played for, and what kind of repertoire was being played. I see some of my customers every three months, whereas others manage to keep going for two years or more. There are several indicators for when the next rehair may be due:

- when you notice that you have to apply more and more rosin. This shows that the hair is simply worn out and has lost its grip.
- if the hairs are breaking at a more frequent rate. Do not let it get to the point where you end up playing on the wood instead.
- if the hair has shortened so that it is impossible to relax the tension fully. Again, visit your bow maker. A drop in humidity can bring this on, which tends to happen in the winter months, especially in places like Norway. This may be potentially dangerous for the bow, as the strain on the head could cause it to snap off.
- if the hair has stretched a lot. Have it checked by your bow maker. It may be down to a change in humidity or the wedge inside the frog may have slipped.

A drop in humidity can shorten the hair, which tends to happen in places like Norway

My advice in your case would be to go and get a rehair. Perhaps you could delegate the couriering. You may want to consider buying a cheap bow as a spare for when your favourite bow is due for a service.

Jutta Walcher has been a professional bow maker and restorer for the past 25 years. She is based in Oxford and London.



BOW PHOTO PAULINE HARDING

@

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DAVID HAWTHORNE

If very much hair is broken off, you are probably rubbing the stick of the bow on the strings while you play. In fact, if your bow is warped towards the playing side, or if it is weak, or if the camber is uneven, this might be why hairs are breaking in the first place. With less hair on the playing side, you are probably pulling the bow more to that side as you tighten it, and you will break even more as you play. As far as damage to the bow goes, you are probably rubbing away a little bit of wood as you play on the stick, and perhaps you are warping the bow too. On the other hand, maybe the bow is not a bow of extraordinary value, and a little wear is not a worry, and maybe when the bow is rehaired it will straighten up again.

Many professionals who rehearse and practise every day have their bows rehaired every six months or so. Students typically get it done once a year, and casual players require it even less frequently. If a player has more than one bow, they may rehair each bow less often because they are using it less frequently while they play their other bows.

If your hair is old and it still works, it's probably OK. If you store your bow for some time without playing it, though, you may lose hairs to the larvae of carpet beetles. If many of your bow hairs are broken, you can identify this problem by looking at the hair ends under a magnifying glass. Instead of a square end, the hairs will have a kind of 'munched-off' look to them, with small dents in the profile tapering to the severed end. Bow owners who play every day won't generally have a problem with these creatures, since they don't like light or disturbance. They also eat natural gut and tortoiseshell.

David Hawthorne runs a summer bow making workshop in Cambridge, MA, US: www.violinbows.net



MICHAEL T. SOWDEN

As a supplier of bow hair I can only answer the last part of the question, regarding the horse hair itself. Bow hair should always be stored away from bright light (for example, in front of sunlit windows) and high temperatures (near central heating). Both of these conditions have the potential to dry out the hair and make it very brittle, which in turn will cause individual hairs to break.

In humid conditions the hair will stretch too much while it is being tightened on the bow. If it is not completely released, after the player finishes their practice the hair will dry out and go back to its original length. This can lead either to hairs snapping out of the bow or, worse still, the bow tip coming off completely. So it is essential for the hair to be correctly stored at all times, whether it's in the workshop of the maker or restorer or in the bow itself.

Bow hair can also become breakable if the hank has been accidentally dropped or mishandled while rehairing, causing the hair to matt up. If this happens, great care will have to be taken, with a comb, to tease out the tangle very gradually without putting too much pressure on the hair by snatching at it – this only stretches the hair and can weaken it before it is put into the bow.

The hair will also be less stressed if it is combed in the proper direction: start at the white of the hank and comb it down to the slightly sandy-coloured tip. By doing this, the hank is being combed in the direction that the natural scales lie and not against them. These scales run down the hairs in the same direction, and without them you would not get good rosin adhesion. ●

Michael T. Sowden is a bow hair supplier based in Drighlington near Bradford, UK: www.sowden.co.uk

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TABEA ZIMMERMANN

VIOLA SOLOIST AND PROFESSOR AT THE HOCHSCHULE FÜR MUSIK HANNS EISLER BERLIN, GERMANY

Hindemith Sonata for solo viola op.25 no.1

A lyrical approach to a characterful, multifaceted work

Paul Hindemith (1895–1963) wrote this sonata for himself in 1922 – apparently rather quickly. He left the first and fifth movements for a train ride between Frankfurt and Cologne, then performed the completed piece in Cologne that evening. It was intended as an easier alternative to the far more difficult Sonata for solo viola op.11 no.5, and he played it frequently between 1922 and 1932, performing it 58 times. He dedicated the work to Ladislav Černý, violist of the Zika Quartet, whom he met at the Donaueschingen Festival in south-west Germany in the summer of 1922. It is a major repertoire piece for viola players and a good example of Hindemith's musical ideas.
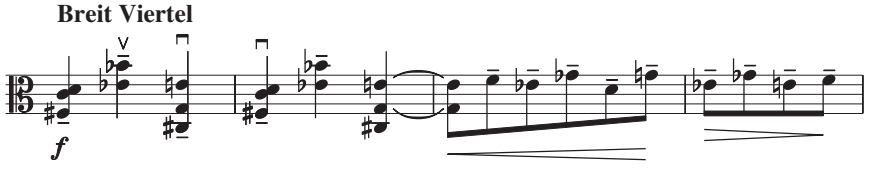
The first time I played this piece I was 14, so I've lived with it for a long time; but today there is a lot that I do differently from when I first played it under the tuition of my German viola teachers. Many musicians find Hindemith's music hard, loud and rough, often because it is performed poorly and over-articulated as a result of the detailed performance markings. But the musical language of a composer can have strong roots in the nature and language of his home, so perhaps, because he came from a place (Hanau, near Frankfurt) where residents speak a very soft dialect of German, we should see Hindemith's writing as more 'singing'. His background was in Classical and Romantic, chamber and orchestral music and, although it might not always seem so in this sonata, he had a fantastic sense of humour – you can see it in his letters and drawings. He was a brilliant painter and caricaturist. I don't see him as a modernist: some elements of his writing are modern, but to me he is more similar to Bach, Beethoven and Brahms than to composers like Berg or Webern.

Before you begin to play this piece, look at the structure of each movement and then at the structure of the whole thing. That way you can decide how you want to build the music over the next 15 minutes. I think of the five movements in two groups: the first and second (linked by an attacca); and then the third, fourth and fifth, which should be seen as a long slow movement with a short, fast middle section. When I start the first movement, I bear in mind its tempo relationship to the second movement. I also think about the maximum and minimum dynamic of each movement and how they relate to each other. When you play the forte at the beginning of the first movement, for example, remember you have to give three times as much for the triple forte at the end of the second.

First movement
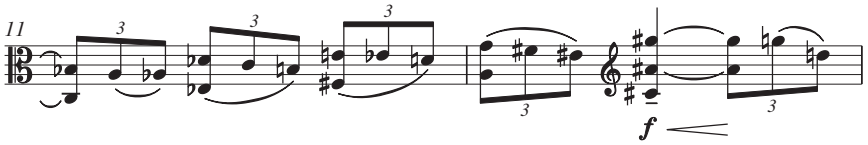
Often students play the opening bars (**example 1**) roughly and heavily, but there is a lot of beauty in this work and my approach is to bring out the melodies. Pay attention to the semitone line running through the chords: these semitones repeat in different places all ▹

EXAMPLE 1 Rather than playing heavy chords to open the piece, focus on bringing out the chromatic line

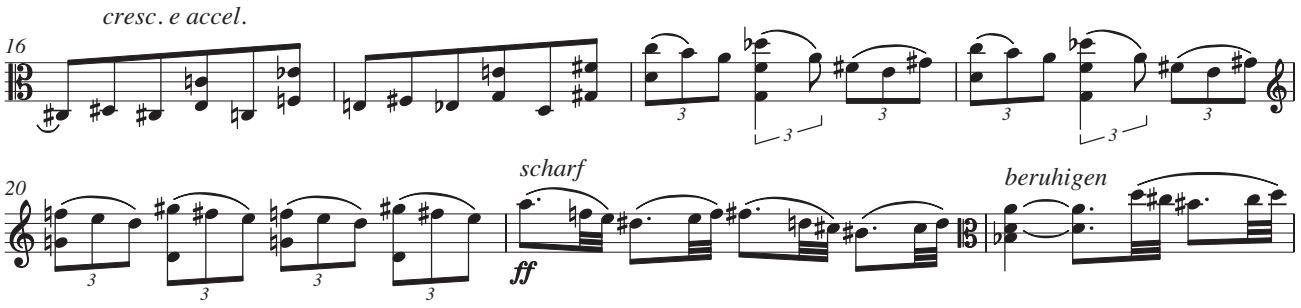


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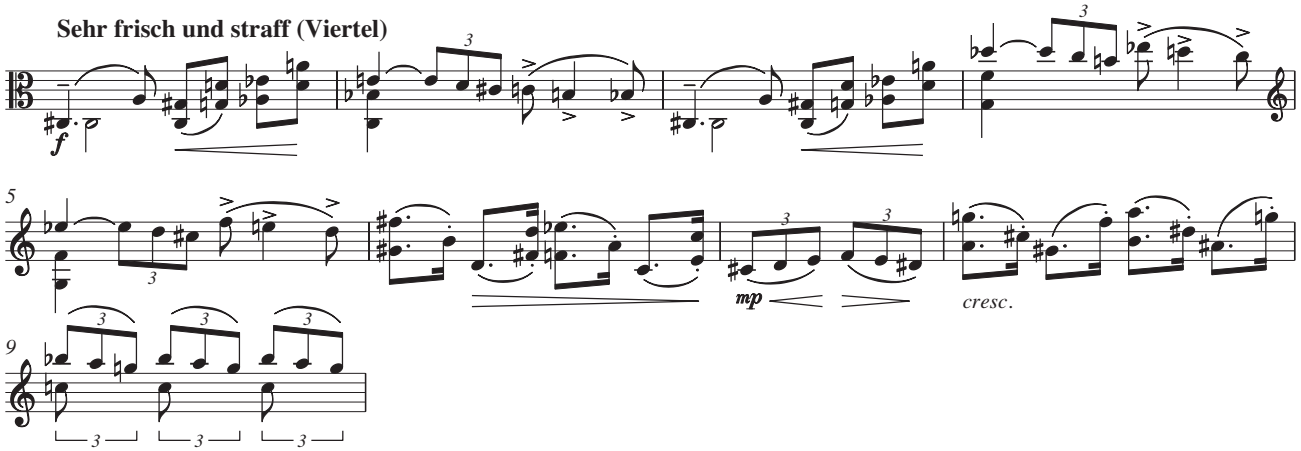
EXAMPLE 2 Hindemith uses a lot of 7ths, so practise shifting exercises in double-stops to make sure you're prepared for passages like this one
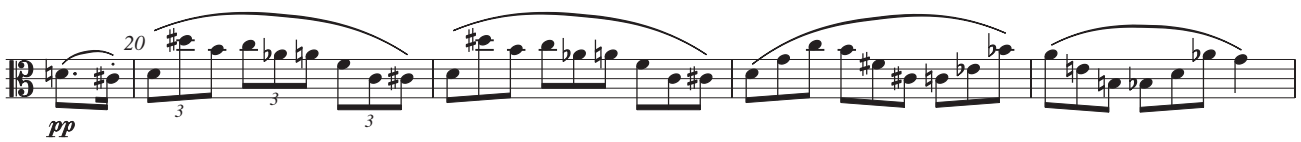


EXAMPLE 3 Continue your accelerando through the *scharf* bar, only slowing down again at the *beruhigen*



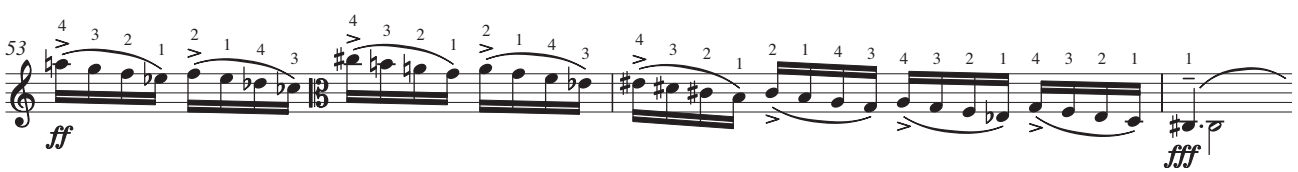
EXAMPLE 4 Play this passage in strict time, being careful to emphasise the character of each triplet

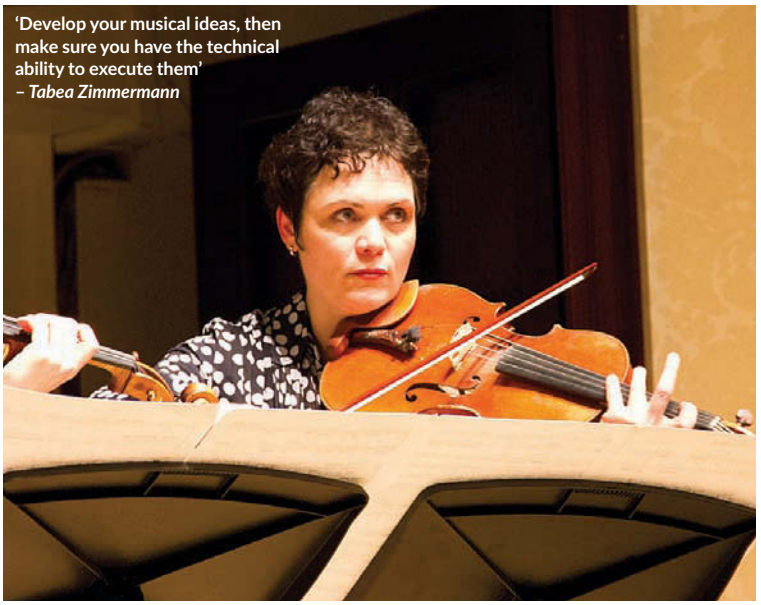


EXAMPLE 5 Practise these bars forte with a marcato stroke before trying to play them pianissimo



EXAMPLE 6 I recommend using these fingerings for this virtuosic variation on a whole-tone scale




'Develop your musical ideas, then make sure you have the technical ability to execute them' – *Tabea Zimmermann*

through the sonata and can be played in a melancholic way. Don't let them be hidden by the other notes. Where chords are marked piano, I like to play very soft arpeggios; when they are forte, I play them all at once.

If we focus on the chromatic line in the first three chords (D, E flat, E), we can make them sound broader and less rough. Practise them using all down bows, then using all up bows, and then in different combinations: down–down–up, up–down–up, and so on. Your aim should be to have a good sound on all three beats and to give the musical rhythm of a 3/4 bar. Make sure that the length and the dynamic of each chord represents your idea of what it should sound like, rather than being a reflection of what you can easily do with your current technique. You should develop your musical ideas first and then make sure you have the technical ability to execute them. Practise playing different options and make your own decisions. I rarely give my students fingerings or bowings: I make them aware of the possibilities and tell them to choose for their own musical reasons. Deciding what to do based on whether you are comfortable with something or not is not an artistic way of doing things, but I do think it's important to use the least possible effort for the best possible result.

Hindemith often uses 7ths, for example in bars 11 and 12 (**example 2**), so it is a good idea to practise playing wide and narrow 7ths using both 1–3 and 2–4 fingerings. I suggest doing slow shifting exercises, moving up a semitone on a slow, crescendoing up bow, and then back down a semitone while doing a diminuendo on a down bow. Next move up a whole tone, then a minor 3rd, and so on. Shift precisely and slowly using the whole arm and hand, always producing a nice sound. The crescendo and diminuendo are meant to help you practise musically and dynamically. Never be static! It is more effective to do this than to treat each new passage of 7ths as an individual problem, and it will help you prepare for the sonata as a whole. I prefer shifting exercises to scales, and I do them every day; my students do too, in single notes, 3rds, 6ths, 7ths and octaves.

Violists tend to accelerando into the fortissimo *scharf* bar (**example 3**), which they suddenly play in half tempo. But the *scharf* bar is the climax of the movement and we shouldn't stop our accelerando just because we've reached the top of the mountain! We have to build up to it, play through it and only come down again afterwards, for the bar marked *beruhigen*.

Second movement

The opening two bars give the signature phrase of this movement (**example 4**), so your rhythm should be strict. The first bar has a very strong, straight pulse in 4/4 and the triplet that comes in the second bar is unexpected. Introduce this rhythmical element very carefully, so that the crotchet (♩) and triplet quavers (♪) don't sound like a dotted crotchet with two semiquavers (𝅘𝅥𝅯). We have to make the listener understand the rhythm, not just play it 'correctly', so using a metronome won't necessarily help. Put enough energy into your bow stroke on the crotchet to carry you through the whole line and let you play the falling semitones melodically – here and each time the element comes back, in bars four, five and later on.

In the second part of the movement, from bar 20 (**example 5**), we see a very different character: something much softer, at a whispering pianissimo. Hindemith suddenly shortens the bars to 3/4 (although he never marks his time signatures) and breaks away from the rhythms of the rest of the movement, putting you on new ground. Before you try playing this passage in pianissimo and legato, I suggest practising it forte with a marcato or off-string bow stroke, in order to help the left-hand fingers find their way quickly and easily: they do this more naturally and with better coordination when we play louder. Once you have done that, play the left hand alone, tapping the fingers accurately on the fingerboard without using your bow. When you do add the bow, play pianissimo with a very light bow stroke that flies over the strings. My teachers used to tell me to use an even bow stroke here, but I don't want to do that any more! For me an even bow speed has become something quite inartistic.

At the end of the second movement there is a variation on a whole-tone scale (**example 6**) – something for which I do suggest a fingering. Energy-wise, bear in mind that this is the loudest passage we've heard so far. I do an accelerando through these bars, but that is ▹

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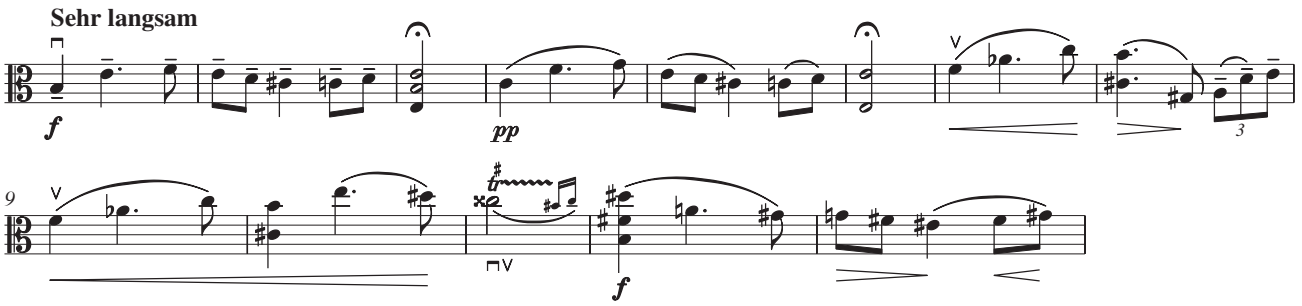
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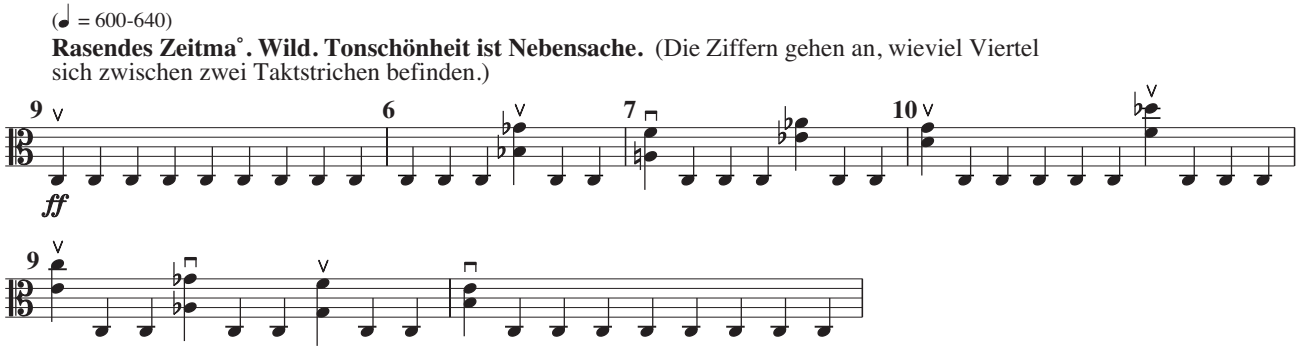
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EXAMPLE 7 The second beat should be played broadly, to emphasise the sarabande-like rhythm and rising 4th



EXAMPLE 8 Play the whole fourth movement off the string, using minimum effort to maximum effect



only one possible interpretation of this insistent, virtuosic cascade. It's like a waterfall. Bring all of your energy together for the triple forte to end.

Third movement

Hindemith writes beautiful slow movements and I think they are very underrated. This movement is the centrepiece of the sonata. Try to find a quiet sound and a vibrato that varies with every note. This should be a conscious part of your interpretation, reflecting the slowness of the movement and underlining the length of the phrases. I tend to use less vibrato when I am playing chords and dissonances – too much vibrato can unsettle the harmony.

In the third movement there is an unusual three-bar shape to the first 3/4 theme, before a mixture of two- and three-bar phrases (example 7). I suggest using a slow bow stroke here, to represent the slowness of the movement. Give the second beat a broad sound to help emphasise the sarabande-like rhythm and the rising 4th. To create a good sound in any slow movement it is important to anticipate the speed of your next bow: if we know the speed of the coming stroke, we can play more smoothly, disguising the sound of the bow change.
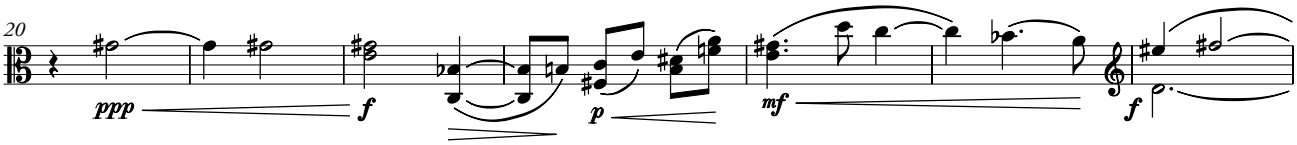
When you are preparing this movement, practise playing the first beat with an up bow and the second and third beats with a down bow. It is best to do this using one note or scales at first. Once you have found a good relationship between the faster up bow and the slower down bow, switch to the 'upside-down' down–up bowing used by Hindemith, making sure that your up bow has a good, heavy sound.

Whenever you are having difficulty with anything in the music, practise it out of the context of the piece, with many variations. Put it back into context later.
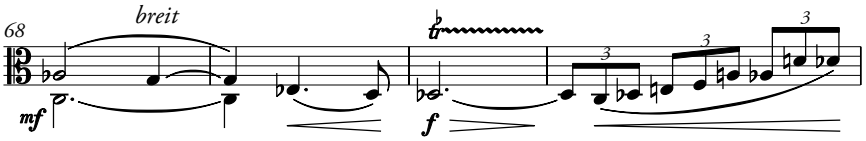
Fourth movement

Hindemith was ahead of his time when he wrote this movement. When György Ligeti was writing his Solo Viola Sonata for me in 1991 he said, 'I have an idea for the fourth movement but I can't write it because Hindemith has written it already!' Hindemith was fascinated by machines, and the repetitive action of machinery can really be heard here (example 8). The movement's heading contains something resembling a viola joke: *Tonschönheit ist Nebensache* ('sound quality is a side matter'). It is a relentless ♩ = 600, and we have to play fortissimo almost constantly. ▹

EXAMPLE 9 Your vibrato should mirror your bow speed here: build in intensity through the crescendo using both the left and right hands



EXAMPLE 10 Make sure that your part has a flat sign in front of the D trill at bar 70: this is missing from many editions



We can drop down to a strong mezzo forte after the seven bars of accented notes before the double bar, but then we have to build up to fortissimo again.

The music is not difficult for the left hand; for the right hand it's a matter of training. It is important for violists' bow technique because we have to make the C string ring quickly and loudly. It is vital that we play the whole movement off the string: if done correctly this is easier and more effective because you can let your bow fall into each note. Use your wrist, not the whole arm, and be sure to discover the right movement or you will find this part of the sonata very tiring.

You can practise your off-string technique by throwing the bow on to the string in the upper half, letting it bounce and feeling the elastic quality of the wood – a bit like a ricochet. Then start using up and down bows with added energy for more sound. After that, isolate the double-stops and play them with a full sound, using the bowings you will use in the context of the piece. Then practise the movement of the string-crossing for each double-stop by playing on the appropriate strings, but without the left hand. Everything should now be in the lower half of the bow, between mezzo forte and fortissimo.

The final stage of work is to build up the speed, bit by bit. First practise the smaller groups of three or four notes (each group starts with a double-stop). Be as economical as possible with your movement as you prepare the string-crossings, making a good off-string sound, and finish with the first double-stop of the next group. Then pause, reflect on what you could do better, and continue practising small groups, gradually increasing your tempo.

Over time you can lengthen the groups, still starting and finishing each one with a double-stop. First practise the groups of six or nine; then practise whole bars, each time including the first note of the next bar. Try to find a way to make your maximum sound with minimum effort, or you will be exhausted by the end of the movement. When you have worked through the individual segments in this way, you can start your next session by practising the coda, then the second part, and then from beginning to end.

Fifth movement

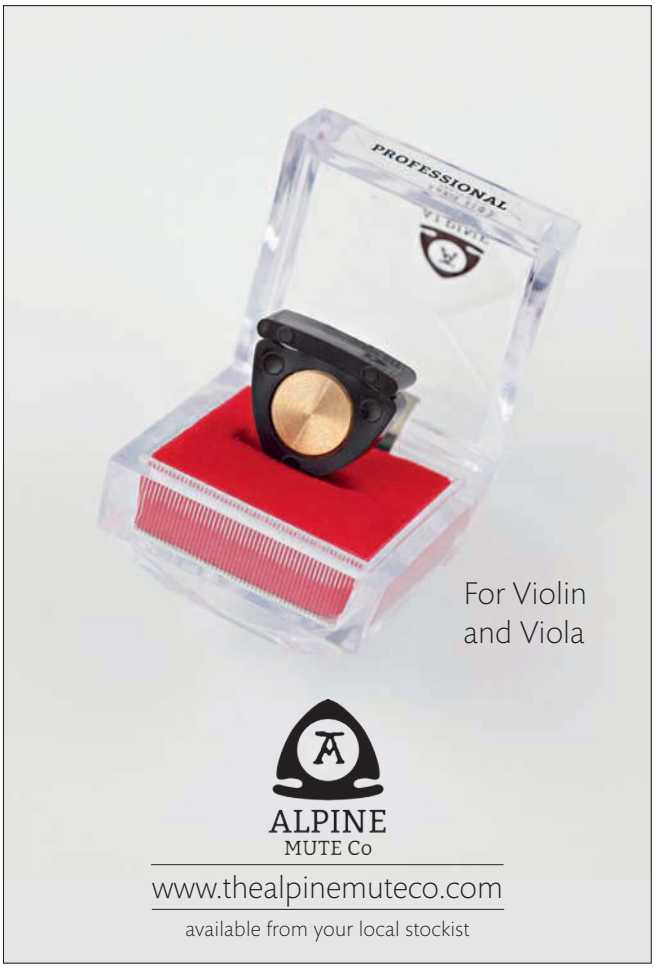
I see this movement as an epilogue to the whole piece. It combines many of its elements, including a big dynamic range, the chromatic lines of the first movement and the rhythm of the second movement.

For the crescendo from *ppp* at bar 20 (**example 9**) it is important that your vibrato mirrors your bow speed. I would start without any vibrato, with a very slow bow, and then crescendo with both the left and the right hand, increasing the intensity. Then enjoy the 3rd – almost in E major for a moment – before moving on to the 7th. Towards the end of the movement, be aware that most editions have a misprint: the dotted minim (𝅗𝅥.) trill of bar 70 should be a D flat, resolving on to a C (**example 10**). Be sure to check and correct your part.

This is Hindemith's best-known solo sonata because the way he wrote it is just perfect: you can make the viola sound like a whole orchestra and you have to use an enormous range of expression. It was a huge success when he wrote it, and it still is – it's a milestone of the viola repertoire. When you've finished working on it, you'd better take your bow for a rehair!

INTERVIEW BY PAULINE HARDING

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This is a technique that is relatively untaught on the bass. The concept originates from Heifetz, who was photographed playing with a light attached to the tip of his violin bow: the long-exposure shots showed figures of eight traced by the moving bow tip. I learnt the concept from cellists, whom I sought out to teach me years ago, when bass pedagogy and the bass repertoire were more limited than they are today.

The idea is to create a connected sound when changing bow, through continuous movement, like a swimmer who comes to the end of the pool and dips underneath to do a somersault before setting off in the opposite direction: if they stop, they lose momentum and it takes more energy to get going again. If the bow stops to change direction and then starts again when you are trying to play legato, you will hear a crunch. We should be able to create a continuous sound, like a wind player circular breathing to form a never-ending phrase. On the bass this is most difficult at the frog because we have to use a lot of weight to produce a good sound until we reach that part of the bow, but we have to reduce the weight at the bow change to avoid producing a swell. That swell is so common in bass playing that it has become part of the bass vernacular.

For a more refined and artistic sound, we need to conquer this aspect of bass technique. It is a particularly useful skill when playing lyrical repertoire because it gives us more time on the note as we change from an up bow to a down bow, making the musical line more connected and letting us create more suspense in our phrasing by, for example, slightly elongating a leading note.

This is also a useful technique when shifting: there is a long distance to move on the bass, so if we stop the bow, shift and then move the bow again, there will be a hiccup in the sound. When students make a two-foot shift on the bass, their thoughts immediately go to the left hand: they think, 'I have to shift faster because I have so little time to make the bow change.' Instead, they can shift more slowly and elegantly, giving themselves more time through the continuous movement of the right hand.

EXERCISES

IMPROVING FINGER FLEXIBILITY

Many players have right-hand and right-arm tension problems when using both the French and German bowing systems. To reduce this tension, we have to identify the muscles we are using and develop their flexibility. The wrist should be flexible in a vertical direction when using a French bow and flexible in a more violinistic horizontal direction when using a German bow. It should also remain mostly flat and straight. All this will help you to change bow smoothly.

One of my favourite exercises is to raise and lower the fingers of the right hand from the knuckles, to help identify the muscles that control the fingers. This kind of flexibility is very important and can be practised using a pen (**figures 1a & 1b**) when you are sitting in lectures, or meetings, or even when you are watching television. When doing string-crossings we should be using our fingers rather than the muscles that control the arm, so we can use this exercise to improve our accuracy, particularly when using the French bow.

We should be able to create a continuous sound, like a wind player circular breathing to form a never-ending phrase

It is important to understand that the final motion of the bow change is not done with the fingers alone, because the fingers are just an extension of the other muscles involved in the process. Nevertheless, if you use all your other muscles properly but your hand is locked tight, you will break the chain of command from your brain to the instrument, and you will not have full control over your sound.

'SHADOW BOWING'

Before putting the technique into practice on your instrument, start with what I call 'shadow bowing'. This is something that works well both for children and adults:

- Hold the bow just above the string, supporting the tip with your left hand.
- Now, in your normal bowing position, practise your bow stroke without touching the string, to get a feel for the correct motion.
- Draw the bow until you are in the final three inches before the frog, then 'dip the tip' to make a small loop as you move into the down bow.

The bow should move in a fairly straight line, and then the tip should dip in a circular motion on the change from up bow to down bow. This slight loop means that the bow keeps moving continuously as opposed to stopping and going in the opposite direction, which would be a staccato stroke.

Shadow bowing requires you to use your muscles in a slightly different way from when you are bowing on the string, because you have to hold the bow up; but it is easier to develop the flexibility needed for the 'dip the tip' motion by bowing in the air. Once the bow is on the string, you have to use a lot of muscle power to guide it and keep it level, and that can be very distracting – particularly for less advanced players.

ON THE STRING

When the correct feeling has been established, you can transfer the movement to the string:

- Play using open strings at first, so that you aren't distracted by your left hand, and use whole bows. Whole bows are easiest for bassists because they require less-advanced physical control than shorter bows. Violinists might find it easier to use half-bows towards the frog.
- Once you are comfortable playing a single resonant note, try playing scales starting around ♩= 60, with four bow strokes per note.
- As you improve, you can speed up your bowing bit by bit until you're just using the bottom third of the bow, always keeping the bow moving. Work up to ♩= 200, always playing detaché rather than staccato.

To build on the technique, vary your bowing patterns (see **exercise**) and increase the distance between the two notes as you progress. You should be making a circular motion with the tip of the bow, not with the hair on the string. Make sure the bow stays at the same distance from the bridge and the fingerboard. ▹
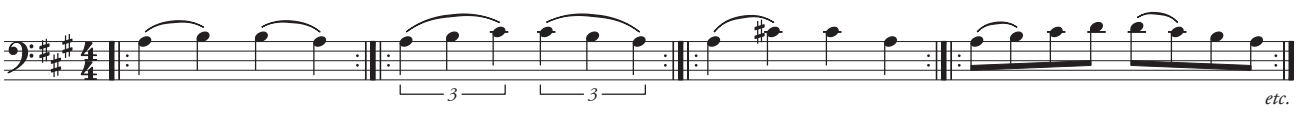


figure 1a



figure 1b

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July 17 – July 25

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Professor Mark Gothóni, violin
(Universität der Künste Berlin, Germany)
Professor Miguel da Silva, viola
(Le conservatoire national de région de Paris, France)
Professor Marko Ylönen, cello
(Sibelius Academy, Finland)
July 19 – July 28

Opera & Lied III
Professor Julia Varady
(Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler, Berlin, Germany)
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REPERTOIRE

When learning this technique it is best to focus on music that is simple for the left hand, such as the exercise on page 85, rather than working on new repertoire.

As you progress with your exercises, you can play pieces containing passages of steady, separate quavers (♪) or crotchets (♩), such as the Praeludium from Kreisler's *Praeludium and Allegro*. Bottesini's *Elegy* and the lyrical first movement of Eccles's Sonata no.11 are also useful. When you are comfortable with these, advance to any lyrical piece containing larger shifts.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

The first time I cover this concept in a lesson, I say to the student, 'Here are the basics and this is how I want you to work on them. Come back next week and we'll see how it's going.' This is a mandatory technique, so work needs to be done over a long period of time. I know some teachers who only let their students play open strings until a technique is perfect, but I don't advocate that kind of approach because, if it's a long-term project, most students of any age will quit after a few lessons. Instead, you have to convince them that the concept is important, show them how to do it and tell them it requires work every day. Eventually they will get there.

For the technique to work, the bow has to stay at the same distance between the fingerboard and the bridge. Students' bows tend to slide up and down the string on the bow change so, to help them, use your fingers to create a tunnel for the bow to go through (**figure 2**). This will keep the bow placement the same when they get to the heel-end of a whole, straight up bow. Then lightly touch the bow as they finish the up bow, to help them tip it into the next stroke (**figure 3**). Once they start to get a feel for that, release the bow but keep the tunnel in place. Do this using a mirror, so that they can see how it looks.

When I'm teaching concepts like this I tend to exaggerate every action, knowing that students will only do a proportion of what I tell them to do when they go home to practise. They will only do what they feel comfortable with. There is always a chance that this approach will backfire and they will exaggerate the movements themselves, though, so I keep an eye on them during weekly lessons!

In America a lot of kids learn to play double bass in elementary- or middle-school orchestra, long before they have lessons. Bass players in an orchestra tend to be ignored: they'll play a couple of pizzicatos, then they'll have to be quiet while the conductor works with the cellos and violins. Teachers can use this time to take the kids into a practice room to work on technique – smooth bow changes, shifting, string-crossing – instead of sitting in orchestra being bored.

IN YOUR PRACTICE

Work on your exercises at the beginning of each practice session, so that you have the correct feeling in your right hand from the outset. Don't practise other things for an hour and then think, 'What am I supposed to be working on? Oh yeah, this bowing thing,' because you will have practised the opposite of what you should have been doing for the whole hour instead of trying to incorporate the technique. It's like playing out of tune: if you don't fix it straight away, you'll be practising playing out of tune and ingraining the problem further, which means you'll have to work even harder to get rid of that habit. If a train leaves the station on the wrong track, it can't just jump over on to the right track – it has to go back into the station first.

Three or four minutes' work on this each time you start to play should be enough to build on this idea. It's not something that has to be done for three hours at a time. I've had summer bass-camp students come back a year later doing this technique beautifully, just because they worked on their exercises a little bit every day.

INTERVIEW BY PAULINE HARDING

STUDIES



Jeff Bradetich
The Ultimate Challenge
There are no particular studies that are designed to work on this technique, but in my book, which takes a lot of ideas from William Pleeth's *Cello*, I give 20 pages of exercises and images relating to the right hand, taking the concepts in this article to the nth degree. Avoid old books by bassists such as Simandl: bass playing has progressed a lot in the last 30 years.



figure 2



figure 3

Reviews

Your monthly critical round-up of performances, recordings and publications

CONCERTS

New York



Joshua Bell: magnetic presence

JOSHUA BELL (VIOLIN) NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA/CASE SCAGLIONE

AVERY FISHER HALL 15 NOVEMBER 2014

In Joshua Bell's hands, his 1713 'Huberman' Stradivari has a tone that invites you to follow him wherever he leads. And on this occasion, Bell deserved enormous praise for programming a not-often-played concerto, Glazunov's op.82, with the New York Philharmonic and its associate conductor, Case Scaglione. Bell has a magnetic presence on stage and on this occasion had a huge gallery of fans, some perhaps a little too eager to cheer his every move. He played beautifully, with warmth and generally spot-on intonation, but to my ears something was missing (though that may be the fault of the piece). A handful of less than seamless left-hand transitions to higher positions were mildly surprising, as well as a few minor tuning slips. But Bell then did a clean, soulful job with the long midpoint cadenza and its rivers of double-stops, and the joyous finale had the requisite effect, with many in the audience standing.

Completing the programme were Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* and Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony. In the latter, especially, the Philharmonic's violins had many moments of splendour; in the final measures, when the orchestra suddenly dwindles to a small chamber ensemble, the hard-working string sextet found both muscle and poetry.

BRUCE HODGES

JEAN-GUIHEN QUEYRAS (CELLO) PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA/YANNICK NÉZET-SÉGUIN

CARNEGIE HALL 5 DECEMBER 2014

Haydn's C major Concerto – the focal point of this evening by Yannick Nézet-Séguin and the Philadelphia Orchestra – made an astounding vehicle for the cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras.

CHRIS LEE

THIS MONTH'S RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS
Our pick of the new releases



Stout/McKay fuse classical and folk
PAGE 95



Stenhammar by the **Stenhammars**
PAGE 100



Armenian mix by **Chouchane Siranossian**
PAGE 104

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With chameleonic ease, Queyras became one with the orchestra to emerge with a silken, roseate solo from his instrument (made by Gioffredo Cappa in 1696), for a fascinating performance. In the first movement, after elegantly dispatching the gruff, arpeggiated chords that open each phrase, Queyras showed an uncanny talent for mimicking the first violins (credit due to Haydn's orchestration, of course), and in the cadenzas – by the cellist himself – some col legno accents showed both creativity and sensitivity.

In the middle movement, the cellist deployed some long-bowed, vibrato-free lines that, perhaps surprisingly, evoked a clarinet or an alto flute. In the final Allegro molto, the emphasis was on 'molto'; I doubted that Queyras and the ensemble could possibly maintain articulation and projection at that hair-raising tempo, but I was wrong. As an encore – after many in the audience stood to cheer – Queyras offered a pensive Sarabande from Bach's Fourth Cello Suite.

A muscular Brahms Third Symphony opened the programme, and afterwards Nézet-Séguin motioned for the entire cello section to stand, recognising its warm contribution. The closing suite from *Der Rosenkavalier* had terrific sumptuousness.

BRUCE HODGES

FRED SHERRY QUARTET

92ND ST Y AT SUBCULTURE 15 DECEMBER 2014

There was little that could have been more satisfying than hearing the Fred Sherry Quartet as part of the 92nd St Y series at SubCulture, even though it was a programme of just one piece. After a whimsical introduction by cellist Fred Sherry from the stage, the four musicians launched into a passionate performance of Schoenberg's String Quartet no.1. The quartet did a commendable job of making sense of a complicated score and the musicians' own understanding of the piece was clear. Each artist played with a rich, lush sound that matched the intensity of the piece well but often moments of rest or respite were overlooked. When the music afforded the opportunity for a bit of relaxation or relief, the quartet continued to power through with tremendous forward energy at almost all times.

However, each musician did sound truly terrific, with especially haunting viola solos from Hsin-Yun Huang and beautiful duo playing among violinists Leila Josefowicz and Jesse Mills. Sherry's final cello solo was filled with nostalgia and longing without feeling overly sad. This piece is not one where the first violinist floats effortlessly above the other voices, and Josefowicz handled the part with her usual brilliance and aplomb. Schoenberg's First Quartet is a work that captures all the love and lust, joy and doubt, hope and sarcasm of life, and the Fred Sherry Quartet's performance did justice to its complex, passionate score.

LEAH SWANN HOLLINGSWORTH

AMERICAN MODERN ENSEMBLE, DEL SOL QUARTET, JACK QUARTET, PUBLIQUARTET/DELTA DAVID GIER

SUBCULTURE 15 JANUARY 2015

Listeners expecting a 'clash of the titans' from this coming together of three quartets and a contemporary string ensemble might not have expected a room overflowing with bonhomie – and such talent. The concert's organiser, the American Modern Ensemble, began with two world premieres: Jacob Bancks's *String Theory* – frisky and rhythmically punchy – and Sidney Boquiren's mournful *…in a mirror dimly…*, a work of sober, unconventional textures.

Jessie Montgomery's *Breakaway* (2013) demonstrated the PubliQuartet's talent for combining traditional notation with improvisation. And their take on Debussy colliding with Charlie Parker created the composite *Bird in Paris* (2015), an engaging melange of melody, percussive snaps and jazzy rhythms.

In John Zorn's 1990 work *The Dead Man*, the Jack Quartet displayed an enormous arsenal of techniques – muted and wiry – including bowing a string with the frog, rather than the hair of the bow. Violent whiplash attacks eventually dissolved into a wisp of cello pizzicato. The Del Sol Quartet donned head microphones to intone phonemes for Chinary Ung's sombre *Spiral X 'In memoriam'* (2007).

To close, Delta David Gier led the combined forces in John Luther Adams's *Dream in White on White* (1992), a sensuous array of slowly evolving chords, often with no vibrato, and another premiere, Robert Paterson's *I See You*, a touching reflection on his father while in hospital, in which the beeping of medical instruments combines with the sound of heartbeats.

BRUCE HODGES

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KRISTÓF BARÁTI (VIOLIN)

WEILL RECITAL HALL 21 JANUARY 2015

What a pleasure to see just a man and a violin on stage – no chair, no music stand. Playing the 1703 'Lady Harmsworth' Stradivari, Kristóf Baráti charmed an appreciative crowd with technique, concentration and modesty. In two Ysaÿe solo violin sonatas (A minor op.27 no.2 and D minor op.27 no.3), Baráti's lithe fingerwork and high bowing arm made an elegant impression. He can also produce a deliberately pallid tone for effect, and then unfurl voluptuous sweetness. Bach's Second Partita for solo violin showed similar contrast and care. Eyes mostly closed throughout, he followed an energetic Gigue with a Chaconne that was all the more moving for its cool understatement.

After the interval came the pinnacle, Bartók's Solo Violin Sonata. The first movement was a tale on its own, combining fragile high notes, vigorous folk fiddling and well-executed pizzicatos. A bold, forceful second movement gave no hint of the intimacy of the ensuing Melodia, and the ticklish finale showed drama underpinned by deep thought.

As an encore, Paganini's First Caprice was impossibly accurate, with Baráti so controlled that he found some humour in its outsize display. And the eager, foot-stomping audience called him out for a second one, the Largo from Bach's Harpsichord Concerto no.5 in F minor BWV1056 – quiet and beguiling to offset Paganini's flash.

BRUCE HODGES



Kristóf Baráti: cool understatement

MAXWELL QUARTET, GAMAL KHAMIS (PIANO)

PURCELL ROOM 5 JANUARY 2015

Writing accessible music yet retaining an individual voice has become one of the major challenges for composers today. Nevertheless, each of the composers featured in this enterprising programme in the Park Lane Group Concerts series retained a clear musical personality.

Since repeated hearings are a luxury for new compositions, this element of immediacy has become even more paramount. It was particularly evident in Robert Saxton's String Quartet no.3, an atmospheric work permeated by numerous timbral effects, though beneath the surface the structural elements are cleverly bound with an understated contrapuntal rigour. The lucid and well-rehearsed performance from the Maxwell Quartet was an added benefit, particularly the ensemble's rather lean sound, which allowed for an impressive transparency of texture.

Kurtág's *Microludes* sautéed together a contrasting range of musical elements in the most concentrated manner. A fusion of Webernian and Bartókian influences, it is whimsically constructed so as to astound us with its concision. Again the linear aspects came to the fore in the Maxwell Quartet's interpretation, vibrato being adopted as a pointed means of colouring rather than as a blunt, ubiquitous norm.

In contrast, Thomas Hyde's String Quartet op.10 was more discursive, perhaps needing greater diversity in the material, which was predominantly cast in sombre harmonic hues. Despite this, the Maxwell Quartet encapsulated the emotional turbulence of the music most effectively. Yet for sheer brilliance and witty characterisation, Thomas Adès's *Concert Paraphrase on Powder Her Face* for piano (from which the third and fourth movements were played) was the most striking work of all, given an outstanding performance from Gamal Khamis.

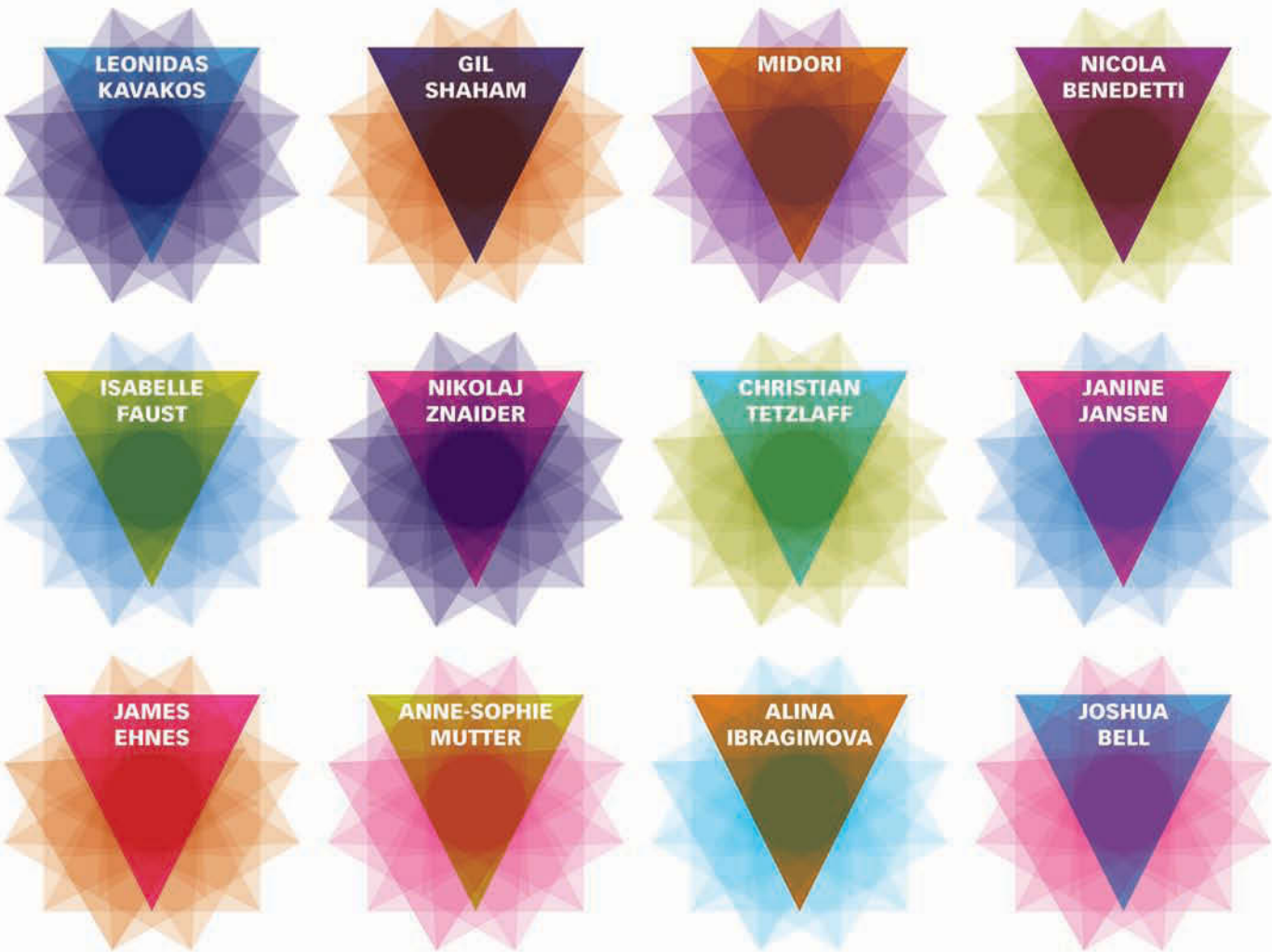
JOANNE TALBOT

OLIVER COATES (CELLO) DANNY DRIVER (PIANO)

KINGS PLACE 9 JANUARY 2015

In a rare live performance of Morton Feldman you begin to grasp the technical challenges that prevent the performer – and indeed listener – from tuning in, chilling out and dropping off. Recordings don't convey the physical awkwardness of the high hand positions and feathery harmonics for the cellist at the opening of *Patterns in a Chromatic Field*, one of the composer's late and lengthy expansions

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Jack Quartet: wild and fruity playing

STEPHEN POFF

of time without argument into a musical analogue of the Persian rugs he knew and loved. Similarly, the piano's gnomically Webernian fragments hang in the air of a hall, whereas they die in front a speaker.

Once the ear adjusts to its scale and quiet eventfulness, however, the 90 minutes of *Patterns* pass quickly; and the unobtrusive mastery of Oliver Coates was symbolised by his position at an angle to the audience, often rapt in contemplation of Danny Driver's luminously voiced punctuations. Musing on two notes for a minute at a time, testing them for weight and strength, Driver played the rigorous grammarian to Coates's lyric poet. As a gentle but firm invitation to listen, it made for a wonderfully sane and reflective evening.

PETER QUANTRILL

JACK QUARTET

WIGMORE HALL 19 JANUARY 2015

Two of the works in this programme were written within the last two years. Georg Friedrich Haas's Eighth Quartet, written in 2014 and receiving its UK premiere, came first, and Simon Holt's Third, composed the year before and heard here for the first time, followed. The Jack Quartet has been playing Haas for years and handled his microtonal challenges with assurance: the subject of the opening fugue consists entirely of intervals smaller than a semitone. There was variety, depth of texture and clear independence of parts, even when the writing was all but homophonic, throughout the 25-minute span.

Holt's quartet slots into third position of the six in his Terrain cycle, for various combinations of string instruments. The titles of its six movements are idiosyncratic – 'a ladder to the moon' and 'expensive, delicate ship' are two of them – and the Jack players provided appropriately vivid playing, spectral at the opening, with some funky pizzicato and high, wailing cello from Kevin McFarland for the moon, some terrific hocketing for the ship, and wild, fruity playing from leader Christopher Otto in the last movement. Finally, there was Elliott Carter's Third Quartet, nearly half a century old and already a classic, performed with a wonderful range of character, tonal power, subtlety of line and variety of colour.

TIM HOMFRAY

THE REVOLUTIONARY DRAWING ROOM

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It may have taken a few moments to adjust to the sound of a period-instrument quartet in St John's Smith Square – a space that dwarfs the domestic environment evoked by this ensemble's title – but once one had surmounted the lack of immediacy (which would afflict most modern quartets in this venue), the alternative tonal hue quickly became attractive.

These Classical instruments may have allowed for more bite in the opening of Beethoven's 'Serioso' Quartet op.95 and more detail, such as in the cello's trilling before the first movement's development section, but it was in the slow movement that the Drawing Room excelled. Here the expressive force came entirely from within the music, combining an almost sublime spaciousness with a surely paced flow. The first movement of Haydn's Quartet in E flat major op.20 no.1 may have seemed a touch flat in profile but the players struck a graceful stride in the Allegretto affettuoso. Beethoven's 'Harp' Quartet op.74 was enriched by a sense of scale, yet its tempestuous third-movement Presto lacked nothing in raw, skirling energy. A more intimate space might have allowed the players to make more colouristic play of tonal effects but these were nevertheless purposeful and revealing performances.

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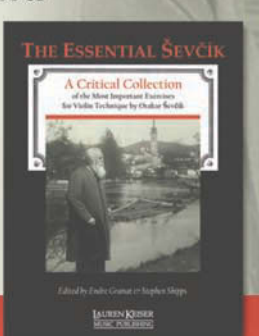
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Violinist Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg has commissioned several new works since becoming music director of the San Francisco-based New Century Chamber Orchestra (NCCO) in 2008 and this engaging disc brings together four of them – in this case a quartet of contrasting concertos showcasing her considerable talents. Clarice Assad's *Dreamscapes*, with its rather blunt opposition of consonantly content and dissonantly anxious dream images, nevertheless proves an ideal vehicle for both Salerno-Sonnenberg's rich, responsive tone and her technical brilliance, and she negotiates the neo-Schoenbergian angularity of William Bolcom's *Romanza* with effortless clarity and a sure sense of direction, delivering the big, stomping ragtime tune of its finale with some deliciously rasping G-string playing. Michael Daugherty's Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired *Fallingwater* draws an assertive yet lyrical performance from the violinist, and she's vivid and direct in the character portraits of Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's *Commedia dell'arte*.

Strangely, it's the playing of her 19 string colleagues in the NCCO that can let things down – ensemble is sometimes a bit ragged, with intonation occasionally on the sour side, even if there's an appealing swagger and confidence to their energetic performances. There's no doubting their energy or commitment in these live recordings, though, which brilliantly capture the group's passion and vigour in warm, rich sound.
DAVID KETTLE



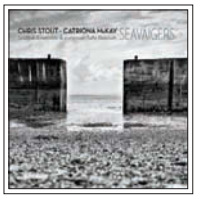
MOMENTS OF YOUTH
BACH Cello Suite no.3 in C major BWV1009 **SCHUMANN** Fantasiestücke op.73 **FAURÉ** Élégie **HAYDN** Adagio from Cello Concerto no.2 in D major **CASSADÓ** Requiebros **PIAZZOLLA** Le grand tango **PAGANINI** Caprice no.9 in E major 'The Hunt'
Brendan Goh (cello)
Reinhard Schobesberger (piano)
ARS PRODUKTION ARS 38752 (SACD)

Debut recital from a teenage cellist – but has he been captured too early?

Brendan Goh is clearly a cellist with some promise. At the age of 15 he is already in his first year at Vienna's Amadeus International School, studying with Franz Bartolomey. Yet on the evidence of this well-engineered CD, it seems rather premature for him to be making a commercial recording. Although his playing is dexterous, with mainly good intonation, there are other aspects that betray his limitations, particularly in regard to portraying a work's underlying harmonic and musical structure.

This is evident in the more rhapsodic movements of Bach's Third Suite. The opening Prélude has curious rubato and speed changes that are not obviously informed by the harmonic movement underpinning the melodic line. Although the faster dance movements have some well-characterised touches, there is a totally unconvincing and illogical use of rubato in the Sarabande. Schumann's *Fantasiestücke* offers secure intonation but a limited dynamic range, and begs for a more overt feeling of fantasy and greater fluidity. Similarly, Fauré's *Élégie*, although accurate, never breathes with the piano, particularly in the accompanying passages of the middle section.

I am not sure what possessed Goh to include a single movement of a Haydn concerto with piano reduction rather than orchestra but it sounds rather anachronistic in this context, and a number of the double-stops both here and in Piazzolla's *Le grand tango* are somewhat wayward.
JOANNE TALBOT



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Contrasting works that take a folk–classical approach

Chris Stout and Catriona McKay are firm fixtures on Scotland's folk scene and, more specifically, in Shetland, where their string band Fiddlers' Bid is based. Both artists cast their nets far and wide (McKay recently recorded a stunning duo record with Swedish nyckelharpa player Olov Johansson) and for this project collaborate with the Scottish Ensemble and British composer Sally Beamish. The album is divided into two parts: Beamish's *Seavaigers* suite and the duo's own work, *Moder Dy*, inspired by a wave pattern off Shetland. Identical in their instrumental make-up – fiddle,

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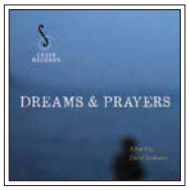
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harp and string ensemble – and folk–classical approach, the two works are nevertheless very different.

In *Seavaigers*, soloists Stout and McKay are seafarers crossing the North Sea: a free-form opening duet develops into a knotty storm scene; the second-movement 'Lament' builds up in inversions of the same melody to convey a sense of anguish. Beamish allows Stout – who gives a high-wire performance here, despite occasional intonation problems – and McKay space to improvise in between ensemble sections that often conjure early Britten. *Moder Dy* does not match the intricacy of Beamish's writing but draws deeply on Shetland dance styles. The eponymous first movement glides gracefully, led by McKay's bubbling harp, and Stout's silky playing leads the piece to its rousing conclusion. Captured in Dundee's spacious Caird Hall, the recording is airy but does not lack definition. Altogether an imaginative and evocative recording project that will translate well to the concert platform.

TIM WOODALL

DREAMS & PRAYERS

BEETHOVEN String Quartet in A minor op.132 – 'Heiliger Dankgesang' (arr A Far Cry) **GOLIJOV** The Dreams & Prayers of Isaac the Blind **HILDEGARD OF BINGEN** O ignis spiritus paracliti (arr A Far Cry) **SANLIKOL** Vecd

A Far Cry, David Krakauer (clarinet)

CRIER RECORDS CR1401 (AFARCRY.ORG)

Heart-on-sleeve playing from a Boston-based string ensemble

If you like your music cool-headed, objective and analytical, this won't be for you. If, on the other hand, you go for passionate, hyper-detailed playing that's determined to wring every last drop of emotion from its material, then this astonishingly vivid disc from the conductorless 18-piece string ensemble A Far Cry, based in Boston, will be right up your street. It's held together by a theme of spirituality, with music from Christian, Jewish and Muslim traditions, and there's an almost uncomfortable intensity and honesty to the group's playing at times. It can all be a bit too much: in the string-ensemble arrangement of the 'Heiliger Dankgesang' from Beethoven's op.132 Quartet, for example, the players replace the disarming simplicity of the original with something far more lush, even sentimental.

It's hard, though, to imagine a more impassioned, compelling performance than that of the disc's centrepiece, Osvaldo Golijov's *The Dreams & Prayers of Isaac the Blind*, which brings together the musics of various Jewish traditions. David Krakauer is astonishingly expressive in the grunts, squeals and keening melodies of the solo clarinet line but he's matched by the ensemble's high-definition, heart-on-sleeve playing, which is technically assured and breathtakingly passionate. The very resonant church acoustic adds a bewitching bloom to the monody of the disc's opener, Hildegard of Bingen's *O ignis spiritus paracliti*, and Mehmet Ali Sanlikol's Sufi-inspired *Vecd* gets a thrillingly slow-burn performance that builds to a shattering climax. It's all a rather draining listen, but a cathartic one too.

DAVID KETTLE


Strings across the sea: Chris Stout and Catriona McKay



NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC PRESENTS: THE GLENN DICTEROW COLLECTION VOL.1

BRUCH Violin Concerto no.1[1] **BARTÓK** Violin Concerto no.1[2] **KORNGOLD** Violin Concerto[3] **WILLIAMS** Theme from Schindler's List[4]

Glenn Dicterow (violin) New York Philharmonic Orchestra/Lorin Maazel[1], Alan Gilbert[2], David Robertson[3], John Williams[4]

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC NYP 20140201

A parting gift from the New York Phil to its long-serving concertmaster

What do you give your concertmaster of 34 years when he moves on? Glenn Dicterow's gift from the New York Philharmonic was a three-volume tribute of live recordings (volumes 2 & 3 are available as download-only), celebrating more than 6,000 performances with the orchestra, over 200 of them as soloist.

Dicterow's ample, sweet tone is on show throughout Bruch's First Concerto but the performance is uprooted by Maazel's stodgy, over-expansive approach: the awkwardly drawn-out themes become a burden on their return and the orchestral strings at climaxes seldom pull back from full throttle. Unaccountably, the first and second movements are merged as one track.

Dicterow illuminates the post-Straussian first movement of Bartók's early Violin Concerto no.1 with an uncanny virtuosity, an effect that only seems to be enhanced as he soars upwards in unaffected rapture. The verdant, cinematic journey from here to Korngold and thence to *Schindler's List* is nicely judged. David Robertson extracts a diaphanous, sensuous sound from the orchestra in the former and Dicterow's playing remains blemish-free. Nor is there any lack of pithiness in the finale. And if there's a touch of what seems like stilted rubato in the *Schindler's List* theme, it's at least done under the baton of its composer, John Williams.

EDWARD BHESANIA



CHEVILLARD Violin Sonata in G minor op.8 **FAURÉ** Violin Sonata no.1 in A major op.13 **GEDALGE** Violin Sonata no.1 in G major op.12

Jean-Jacques Kantorow (violin) Alexandre Kantorow (piano)

NOMAD MUSIC NMM001

Father-and-son duo offers a pair of rarely heard French sonatas

There is a radiance in the quality of sound and performance of three late 19th-century French sonatas from the recently formed Kantorow duo, the gifted 18-year-old son joining his famous violinist father. The works come from that heavily perfumed era that held sway in Paris salons, the frequently recorded Fauré gaining much from the warmth generated by the liberally applied vibrato of Jean-Jacques. If his creamy quality tempers the passion in the opening movement, the following Andante is perfectly shaped and the scherzo full of spiky fun. Add the supple phrasing and shading of the finale and this becomes a safe recommendation, to which is attached two rarely performed works.

It may well be owing to the balance given by the sound engineers but the piano dominates in the highly active passages of the first two movements of the Sonata by Camille Chevillard (1859–1923), the nimble fingers of Jean-Jacques coming to the fore and exciting in the brilliant final Polonaise. Musically the Sonata by André Gedalge (1856–1926) – the composer who helped Fauré reshape the Paris Conservatoire – is in the same style, Alexandre greatly enjoying himself in the outgoing piano role, with the violin part often doing little more than decorating.

Even with the caveat on the balance between instruments, the recording is of a very pleasing quality.

DAVID DENTON



CORELLI The 'Assisi' Sonatas

Aurora Ensemble

GLOSSA MUSIC GCD921209

Disputed early sonatas provide virtuoso opportunities

Scholars have hotly debated the provenance of a manuscript of twelve sonatas attributed to Corelli, discovered in 1963 by Mario Fabbri in the library of Assisi's Franciscan monastery. Musicologist Hans Joachim Marx considered these works spurious, assigning them only to the appendix (Anh.38–49) of his catalogue of Corelli's original works; however, researcher Guido Olivieri and violinist Enrico Gatti claim that available evidence confirms them as some of the Italian's early experiments in the genre.

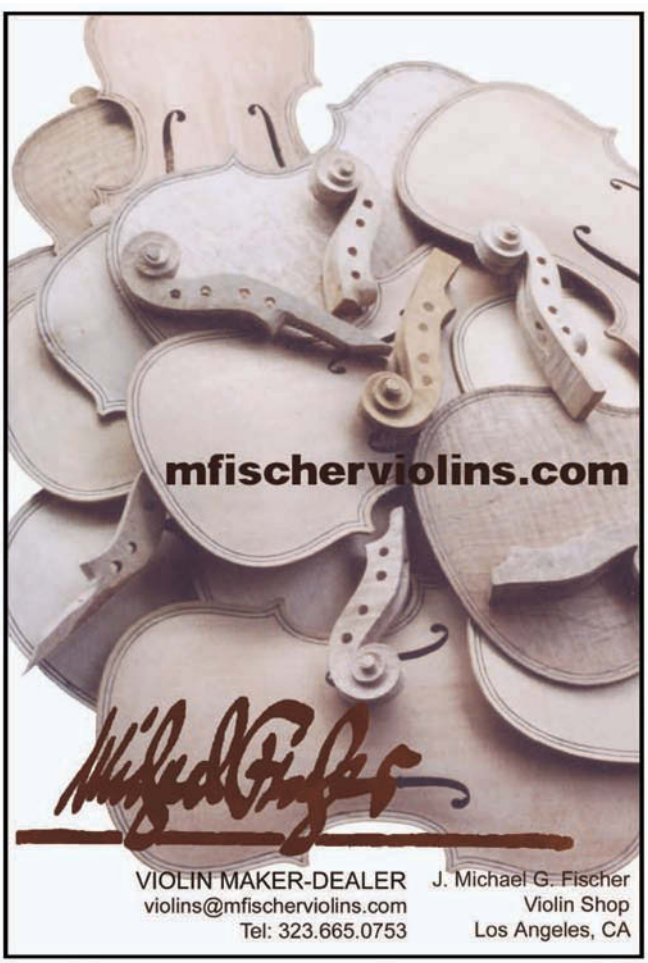
Whoever their composer, these brief, three-movement sonatas serve as excellent vehicles for Gatti's agile technique and flamboyant performing approach, particularly their gigas (Anh.47, 48) and their challenging double/multiple-stopping (Anh.38, 43, 49). His sweet-toned lyricism, plentiful vibrato and expressive sensibility unfold each phrase naturally and his *doubles* for the Gavotta of Anh.38 and stylish embellishment of the introductory preludios flow spontaneously and convincingly. He is accompanied by the sensitive pairing of cellist Gaetano Nasillo and harpsichordist Anna Fontana, who are recorded too discreetly in the balance, especially when imitating the violin; the accompaniment is pared down to one instrument



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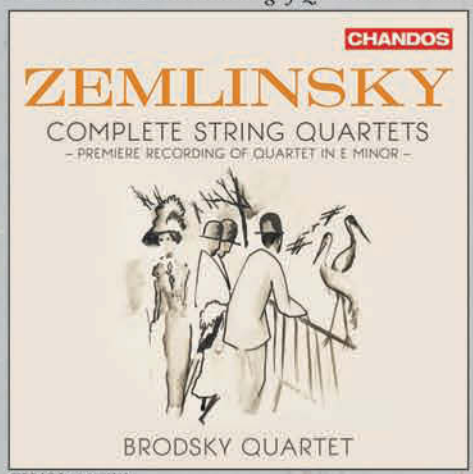
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Stenhammar Quartet: eponymous obligation



in Anh.43 (cello) and 44 (harpsichord). Perceptive accounts of four later, more substantial sonatas from the Corelli catalogue's appendix (Anh.33–36) are also included, with Anh.35 in A minor the pick of the bunch.

ROBIN STOWELL

STENHAMMAR String Quartets vol.2: no.1 in C major op.2; no.2 in C minor op.14

Stenhammar Quartet

BIS 2019 (SACD)

Scandinavian players do their namesake proud as they continue their exploration

The Stenhammar Quartet has an eponymous obligation to do justice to Wilhelm Stenhammar's quartets, and indeed it does in this disc that follows up the ensemble's vol.1 (quartets nos.3 and 4, reviewed in October 2013). First of all, this is terrific quartet playing (for any repertoire), with its unanimity and flexibility, technical security and balance. In his First Quartet, Stenhammar slotted consciously into the Romantic Austro–German mainstream, with Brahms to the fore and Beethoven close behind. The players handle the dotted rhythms of the first movement with exuberance matched by clean, clipped phrasing, the sound always warm. On the whole they don't meddle: they do what the composer says, following his dynamics, and it works beautifully. The slow movement of the First Quartet has a wistful simplicity; the syncopated third movement and the finale have easy-flowing charm, before Stenhammar moves into agitato and molto energico mode, with an unexpected tranquillo to round off.

In his Second Quartet the composer enters more enigmatic, chromatic territory and the players respond with a performance that is both gritty and warm. In the first movement they weave the disparate fragments into one emotionally charged narrative, and violist Tony Bauer plays beautifully in the sinuous, far-ranging first theme of the second movement. There is grim energy offset by flashes of Haydnesque cheerfulness in the scherzo and adept contrapuntal playing in the finale. The recorded sound is warm, with just enough bloom.

TIM HOMFRAY

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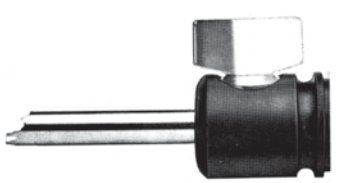
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WOLF Italian Serenade **GRIEG** String Quartet no.1 in G minor op.27 **JANÁČEK** String Quartet no.2 'Intimate Letters'

Amphion Quartet

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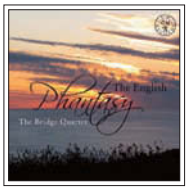
Mixed results in three varied masterpieces of the quartet repertoire

Convincingly linking the very disparate sections within Grieg's four-movement structure, the New York-based Amphion Quartet gives a highly impressive account of the composer's youthfully passionate First Quartet. Having ideally balanced the vigour and tenderness of the opening Allegro, the players move away from the required gravitas to bring charm to the second-movement Romanze, though it is their fiery approach to the finale that sets the performance apart from most other recordings.

Fastidious as they are in their attention to Grieg's dynamic markings, the players probably exceed Janáček's expectations in the opening Andante of his Second Quartet 'Intimate Letters', where the wispy sul ponticello passages almost disappear from audibility. I would have expected the leading violin to scream out the third movement's heartbreak more emphatically and to produce more frightening outbursts in the neurotic moments of the finale. But these are caveats in an otherwise technically immaculate performance, though the Lindsays (ASV) come far closer to encapsulating the quartet's story of sorrow.

A lightweight approach to Hugo Wolf's *Italian Serenade* makes a charming overture and the close microphone placement captures every inner detail, with impeccable balance between instruments throughout the disc.

DAVID DENTON



THE ENGLISH PHANTASY

Works by Bridge, Holst, Goossens, Howells, Holbrooke and Hurlstone

Bridge Quartet

EM RECORDINGS EMRCD 025

Cobbett's competition works in a useful collection

This enterprising disc focuses on quartets written for the competitions held between 1906 and 1919 by amateur violinist and chamber music proponent Walter Willson Cobbett to revive and develop the 'Phantasy', a genre that soon grew in popularity as a result. Frank Bridge's *Phantasie Quartet* for the inaugural competition is one of the highlights, with a first section that marries march and scherzo elements, and a freely lyrical slow section – but the Bridge Quartet lacks a degree of both precision and musical sweep, making this version a clear second-runner to the Maggini Quartet's rendering for Naxos.

The works by Holst and Howells, for the folk-song Phantasy competition of 1917, are miles apart in quality (Holst later withdrew his work, while Howells won second place). The Bridge Quartet seems reluctant to enter into the rustic swagger of the former but sounds more at home in Howells's rich layering and varied moods. There's wonder, too, in the performance of Eugene Goossens's *Phantasy Quartet* (1915), which is Ravelian in its malleable harmonies.

Joseph Holbrooke's sixth-prize winner in 1905 and William Hurlstone's top entry the same year complete the disc (the latter, along with the Holst and Goossens, released on disc for the first time). Overall the playing is not of the first rank but fans hungry for this repertoire will not be disappointed.

EDWARD BHESANIA



TETRAKTYS

Works by Casillas, Nossa, Palacio, Castro, Pichardo, Vergara, Lemus, Sarti, Rivera and Urrusti

Latin American Quartet

URTEXT ONLINE JBCC 239

Energy and commitment in a collection of new Mexican string quartets

It's certainly a laudable project – a collaboration between Mexico City's Núcleo Integral de Composición composers' institute and the Latin American Quartet to perform and record new works for string quartet by ten young Mexican composers, many of them writing for the medium for the first time. And although the results are unavoidably mixed – in his *Chandrian*, for example, Mateo Nossa sounds unsure of what to do with his palette of extended techniques – the disc offers a fascinating insight into new music from a seldom-sampled source.

What emerges most strongly, both in the works and in the Quartet's committed playing, is a joyful sense of rhythm: in the driving syncopations of Eugenio Casillas's *Fibonacci on the Beach*, for example, or the vividly delivered, tango-like sultriness of Eduardo Palacio's dream-inspired *Onirik*. Most immediately appealing is Juan Andrés Vergara's Adams-esque *3DOKU*, inspired by (you guessed it) 3D sudoku, whose helter-skelter figurations allow the quartet players to show off their remarkable range of tone, attack and phrasing – alongside their exciting rhythmic precision.

Other highlights include the desolate *Ciudades suspendidas* by Jean Angelus Pichardo, full of angry yet precisely controlled gestures, and Miguel Rivera's Jackson Pollock-inspired *White Abstract*, brought to urgent life in an energetic performance. Sound is closely captured but balanced.

DAVID KETTLE

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TIME REFLEXION

Works by Rust, El-Khoury, Leclair, Stamitz, Tanguy and Narekatsi

Chouchane Siranossian (violin) with Rüdiger Lotter (baroque violin) Jean-Marc Phillips-Varjabedian (violin) Levon Chatikyan (duduk)

OEHMS OC 885

Old and new combined by this Armenian violinist and friends

If pretentious titles usually put you off heterogeneous concept albums, hold your horses. This one contains first recordings of two substantial and fascinating late Baroque/early Classical solo works by Rust and Stamitz, dispatched by Chouchane Siranossian on a Gagliano with a period set-up with terrific verve and unfailing good taste. Besides the evident intellectual curiosity of this French–Armenian violinist in reviving two figures on the margins of central European culture between the glory years of Bach and Mozart, there's much to admire in her rhythmic security and gently playful approach to the dance forms, especially in Rust's Second Sonata, which is technically demanding and inventive in equal measure.

Siranossian is joined by Rüdiger Lotter for a bold and dashing account of Leclair's op.3 no.5, no less intense than a preceding pair of soliloquies by Bechara el-Khoury, *Arminia* (slow, soulful) and *Perpétuel* (you get the idea). More substantial is the Sonata for two violins by Éric Tanguy, which playfully references a Baroque moto perpetuo in movements either side of a rhapsody of overlapping lines, like the Bach 'Double' with added swing. Her partner here (on a modern set-up) is Jean-Marc Phillips-Varjabedian, and then the duduk player Levon Chatikyan for a final, wistful nod to her Armenian heritage with an arranged hymn-like song, *Havun-Havun*, by an early medieval Armenian mystic. Siranossian writes her own thoughtful booklet note linking these pieces; I hope to hear much more of her.

PETER QUANTRILL



UNDER THE STARS

Works by Spencer, Bull, Debussy, Elgar, Bizet/Hubay, Hubay, Dvořák, Tchaikovsky, Kreisler, Fauré, Brahms, Shostakovich and Siem

Charlie Siem (violin) Munich Radio Orchestra/Paul Goodwin

SONY CLASSICAL 88883 78764 2

Starry violinist dazzles and charms in a disc of encore pieces

This disc features a generous mix of virtuoso fireworks and sweetmeats tailor-made for the suave musicality of the charismatic Charlie Siem. We are served a selection of popular melodies, including Debussy's *Clair de lune* and Elgar's *Salut d'amour*, alongside more modern additions such as the creamy Romance from Shostakovich's *The Gadfly*, and Siem's own rhythmically spiky *Canopy*.

Hubay's fiendishly difficult *Carmen Fantasy* offers Siem the opportunity to dazzle with his mercurial left-hand fingers dancing around the Toreador's March, then slithering around the strings with meticulous double-stopping in a slinky Habanera. His warm and free-flowing account of Tchaikovsky's *Sérénade mélancolique* is also most welcome, and I particularly like his exotic and seductive approach to Kreisler's seldom-played *La gitana*. Elsewhere, in Fauré's *Après un rêve* and Dvořák's *Songs My Mother Taught Me*, Siem's very generous and warming vibrato produces honeyed sounds.

In a pleasing, well-balanced recording, the Munich Radio Orchestra under Paul Goodwin makes a more positive contribution than we normally hear in such 'lollipop' programmes.

DAVID DENTON



A WAR CONCERT: TRANSCRIPTIONS BY JASCHA HEIFETZ

Works by Ponce, Kreisler, Gershwin, Foster, Debussy and Castelnuovo-Tedesco

Lucio Degani (violin) Andrea Rucli (piano)

BONGIOVANNI GB 5183-2

A re-creation of Heifetz's concerts to provide entertainment at the front line

Entertaining troops at the various points of conflict during the Second World War was the contribution made by the 40-year-old Jascha Heifetz, and though details of the music he performed were never documented, it is reasonable to assume his programmes would have been of a lightweight nature to be enjoyed by everyone. Linking that with the transcriptions Heifetz was recording at much the same time, the Italian violinist Lucio Degani has created a supposed programme for one his war concerts.

A judicious and highly attractive mix, many of the tracks – including the traditional song 'Deep River', Manuel Ponce's *Estrellita* and Stephen Foster's 'Old Folks at Home' – are here played with warm tone and disarming charm. Degani revels in the technical fireworks Heifetz created in the adaptation of Gershwin's *Three Piano Preludes*, and even more so in the five excerpts from *Porgy and Bess*, where he convincingly captures the operatic mood that seems to evade so many on disc.

Two of Kreisler's original works – *Syncopation* and *Farewell to Cucullain* – are also included, with the pianist Andrea Rucli adding much to an atmospheric reading of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Sea Murmurs* and a mischievous performance of Debussy's *Golliwogg's Cake Walk*. The recording has a short playing time (53 minutes) in monochromatic sound.

DAVID DENTON







ROMANTIC VIOLIN MINIATURES

Julian Haylock reviews a trio of discs of recital bonbons

In the frosty world of post-Darmstadt modernism, the Romantic violin miniature became intellectually sidelined. However, following Itzhak Perlman's lead, in recent years this seemingly inexhaustible repertoire of musical gems has made a sensational comeback, as can be savoured on a selection of new releases from three rising stars of the violin firmament.

Magdalena Filipczak opens her recital *Essence of Violin* (Audio-B ABCD 5031) with a glittering performance of Ysaÿe's famous arrangement of Saint-Saëns's *Étude en forme de valse*, in which the various multiple-stoppings and thrown harmonics are offset by beguilingly phrased insinuations of ballroom delight. Her plaintive tone (coloured by a medium-fast, narrow vibrato) and temporal suppleness are particularly well suited to Elgar's world of autumnal reminiscences (*Chanson de matin* and *Salut d'amour*) and she also proves a captivating exponent of Piazzolla's twilight cool (*Bordel 1900* and *Café 1930*) with guitarist Martin Fogel, before whipping up a virtuoso storm with Wieniawski's notorious *Faust* Fantasy (after Gounod), in which gifted pianist Agnieszka Kozlo follows her every inch of the way. Also included are hauntingly atmospheric performances of three Britten rarities – the *Reveille* concert study and the Lullaby and Waltz from the op.6 Suite.

Compared to the open acoustic afforded Filipczak, **Lana Trotovšek** and her outstanding accompanist **Yoko Misumi** (Hedone HCD 12001) sound slightly more studio-bound, although this only serves to heighten the gloriously impassioned nature of their performances. In standards by Bloch (*Nigun*), Kreisler (*Liebesleid* and the *Praeludium and Allegro*), Brahms (*Sonatensatz*) and Bartók (*Romanian Folk Dances*), alongside the Gershwin/Frolov *Porgy and Bess* Fantasy, Trotovšek proves an exciting player of real temperament, making even the most well-worn of phrases sound freshly minted. This kind of playing casts its own unique spell through sheer force of musical personality, not least in a desert-island performance of Fauré's *Après un rêve*.

Occasionally a young violinist emerges of such exceptional ability that it feels as though one is listening to a long-established master. Such a player is **Jiří Vodička**, whose seemingly infallible intonation, mellifluous technique and luminous tonal transparency (faithfully recorded) combine on his recital disc *Violino Solo* (Supraphon SU 4175-2) in exemplary performances of pieces by Paganini (Caprices nos.5, 15 and 24 and 'Nel cor più' Variations), Haas (*Short Variations on a Theme of Paganini*), Kreisler (*Recitativo and Scherzo–Caprice*), Ysaÿe (Sonata no.3, 'Ballade') and Bach (Partita no.3) to dazzling effect. Most remarkable of all is a performance of Ernst's finger-crippling 'Erlkönig' Fantasy in which he somehow finds the space to shape and time phrases despite the pyrotechnical excruciations. Definitely a name to watch out for.

JULIAN HAYLOCK



Jiří Vodička: a name to watch out for

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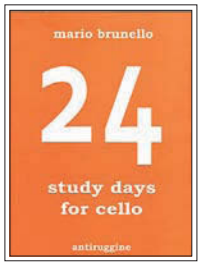
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BOOKS



24 Study Days for Cello
Mario Brunello
107PP ISBN 9788894025316
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How can advanced cellists find new ways of improving and keeping up their technique? For the answer, Italian cello player Mario Brunello has drawn on the work of his own tutor, the renowned cellist and conductor Antonio Janigro (1918–89). Janigro, as Brunello recalls in his introduction, used to give his pupils handwritten sheets featuring 3rds, octaves and bow stroke exercises, all numbered to cover everything in one month. He called it his 'cure'.

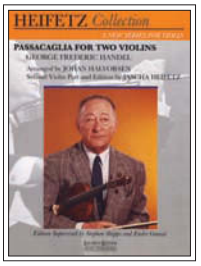
Brunello remembers undertaking the cure and noticing improvements in his playing within days. The exercises were never boring: 'Every day had little problems to solve,' he says, and it was up to the student to overcome any technical problems. This book is Brunello's own version of Janigro's cure. Each day includes a different major or minor scale, although the exercises for the day are not noticeably based around it.

In structure, the exercises are more like Feuillard's widely used *Daily Exercises for Cello* (being broken into small numbered passages) than Dotzauer's *Violoncellschule*, which are studies by another name. There are two double-page spreads for each day – two pages for the bow, followed by two for the left hand – which Brunello estimates will take 90 minutes per day. A metronome is an essential companion for the bowing pages, which always start with an exercise counting as many as 24 slow beats in one bow.

What makes this book approachable is the frequent helpful tips. For instance, after a thumb-position exercise, the player is reminded: 'During the shift of the thumb, what is the position of the other fingers? Pay attention, keep the other fingers in place!' The text is obviously a translation, but Brunello's meaning is never opaque. There are some idiosyncrasies, such as the use of the fourth finger in high registers in thumb position, but generally this chunky and attractively produced book, peppered with thought-provoking quotes from famous musicians (notably Casals), offers a refreshing change from the traditional options.

JANET BANKS





The Heifetz Collection
Handel Passacaglia for two violins[1], Wieniawski Polonaise brillante no.2[2]
Eds. Endre Granat[1 2], Stephen Shipps[1]
ISBN 9781581061758[1] ISBN 9781581061765[2]
LAUREN KEISER MUSIC $22.95[1] $14.95[2]

These editions of the Handel Passacaglia and Wieniawski *Polonaise brillante* have been taken from Jascha Heifetz's own arrangements and transcriptions, now residing in the archives of the Library of Congress. This version of the Passacaglia is a curious case – an edition of a transcription of an arrangement of the original piece! Heifetz's recordings of the violin–viola and violin–cello incarnations (with William Primrose and Gregor Piatigorsky respectively) are well known. Although it is good to have this version for two violins, the editors' assertion that Heifetz composed it is a major stretch, because the second violin part is a straight lift from the viola part.

The fingerings (presumably Heifetz's, although that isn't clearly stated) are not inserted very consistently; they are nearly absent in the last variations of both parts when they would come in handy to the student, and are generally sparser in the second violin part. On the other hand, there is a good array of bowing articulations.

The edition of the *Polonaise brillante* is based on Wieniawski's own manuscript, which Heifetz had in his library. Again, it is not clear whether the fingerings and bowings are Wieniawski's originals or Heifetz's, passed on to his student Endre Granat, who supervised this edition. Either way, they are very good and will further the student's left-hand technique through the use of half-positions, a variety of position changes and fingered-octave structures. Bowing distribution is a particular feature of this music and all the bowings and articulations are worth adhering to (they are more fully convincing than, for example, those in the edition by Wieniawski's contemporary August Wilhelmj).

The editions are well presented and worth having, although they are on the slight side. They would have had more substance had they included the viola and cello parts of the Passacaglia, and an edition of Wieniawski's other Polonaise, in D major op.4, which Heifetz played frequently. If an edition of his couldn't be found, it would still have been possible to reconstruct one on the basis of his recorded and filmed performances.

NATHANIEL VALLOIS

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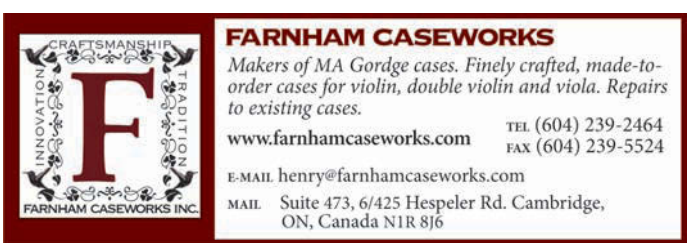




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From the ARCHIVE

FROM THE STRAD — APRIL 1935 — NO.45 VOL.540

With the burgeoning market for recordings and broadcast performance, could the concert violinist be a dying breed?

By JOHN DUNN.

FOUR years ago, my home-coming after a successful world tour was somewhat marred by the shock I felt at the sweeping changes in musical affairs which had come about during my comparatively short absence. The new conditions were to me almost as bewildering as what Rip Van Winkle must have experienced on waking after his twenty years' sleep.

The complete change-over from silent pictures in the cinemas, owing to the advent of talkies, meant over ten thousand violinists and other players thrown out of work. And though some of these have been fortunate enough to receive engagements in orchestras still carrying on, jazz or dance bands, the majority were obliged to seek non-musical occupations or trust to charity and chance jobs.

Equally far-reaching in effect was the overwhelming power exercised by the (then) newly organised British Broadcasting Corporation. Nearly all the concert and choral societies in provincial centres rapidly dwindled away though lack of support, their old supporters no doubt preferring "listening-in" before a nice fire, to attending concerts on cold nights.

The disappearance of all but the bigger and wealthier provincial concert societies means a great loss to solo players and vocalists, and though most of these receive perhaps about half a dozen engagements yearly from the B.B.C., this hardly compensates for what is lost to them.

Even in small orchestras, the violinists, like the supporting extras in star trios, etc., are usually selected from first-class orchestral players. A member of one of these told me what a source of anxiety is the insecurity violinists nowadays feel about retaining their job, the losing of which might mean being permanently out of work. Certainly there is less chance of this happening to an experienced first-class player than to a less accomplished hand.

This brings me to the question:— whether or not it is worth while to take up violin-playing as a profession? Without considering, of course, the higher flights of solo-playing, which always have been reserved to the specially gifted few, it is fairly safe to presume that there will always be some orchestras requiring first-class players. My answer then to the above question is this:— It all depends on the shape and size of one's hands and the possession of general musical gifts to enable the student to give satisfactory evidence at an early age (say round about fourteen years) of promise before twenty to attain a high standard of professional ability, failing which it would, in most cases, be advisable to take up some other vocation and follow music as a delightful hobby.


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ALBAN GERHARDT

The German cellist's views on how Dvořák's Cello Concerto should, and should not, be played have formed over many years – and with the help of Paul Tortelier



Dvořák's Cello Concerto is by far the best piece ever written for cello and orchestra. Many musicians, not just cellists, have told me so over the years – some even say it's the finest concerto written for any instrument. It's an incredibly symphonic work – I don't view it as a cello concerto. It's more like a richly textured piece for orchestra that happens to have the cello as its protagonist. In my opinion it belongs in the same category as Britten's *Cello Symphony* and Prokofiev's *Symphony-Concerto*.

I first heard it when I was twelve, in a live performance by Rostropovich at the Berlin Philharmonie. It was a mind-blowing experience and I knew immediately that I wanted to perform it at least once in my life. Three years later, when I was 15, I heard a second live performance given by another great cellist. By that time I knew it quite well, and I could tell he was putting all kinds of crazy stuff into it – it was as if he just didn't care about it. I thought, 'He must be eternally bored with this piece!'

I think it's a mistake to treat the Cello Concerto as a kind of showpiece and to use it just to show off one's cellistic skills. I see that as somehow blasphemous. Dvořák didn't want to write a virtuosic concerto, and refused to add the cadenzas that cellist and dedicatee Hanuš Wihan wanted to play. Everything you need is in the score and you don't have to add very much to bring your own personality to it: it's a case of 'less is more'.

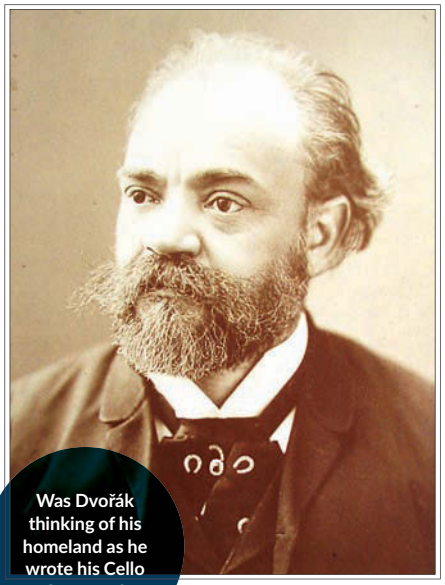
I remember rehearsing the concerto with the Slovak Philharmonic under James Judd about 15 years ago for a festival in Prague. After rehearsing the first movement James did something very unusual: he put down his baton and thanked the orchestra for showing him how it should be played. It was a very precise reading, with hardly any rubato, and all members of the orchestra were clearly listening to each other throughout. You have to approach this work, I believe, with more strictness than you would, for example, a Beethoven sonata.

After that performance in Prague, the festival organiser congratulated me and said he never thought a German cellist could perform that piece so authentically! I told him that my grandfather was a Czech composer–conductor and I'd played through the scores he'd left us when he died. I like to think that his posthumous influence helped to push me towards this concerto as well.

When I hear young cellists attempting this concerto, I often hear them adding emphases that aren't needed. For instance, in the very first phrase they'll give the end of the minims a little push for effect. There's no reason for it and I can't hear it in older recordings – it's a recent development that's not justified by anything in the music. My tutor Markus Nyikos used to remind me of the first words in every printed score: *Nachdruck verboten*. It's the copyright warning, but taken literally it means 'After-push forbidden'!

Paul Tortelier also helped form my opinion of the concerto, although I only had one masterclass with him, in 1988. He gave very specific notes on certain points: 'Don't play this triplet in the German way, which is too precise; and don't play it the French way, which is too lyrical. Find a way to play it somewhere in between.' Going through the last movement, he used the image of Dvořák coming back to his homeland and meeting his family. While still playing, he would say, 'Ah, there you are, brother!' as if it were Dvořák talking. As he went on, it became: 'Is my grandmother still alive... oh yes, there she is!' He had tears in his eyes as he was telling this story that he was making up for us. On that occasion, perhaps he wasn't playing exactly what Dvořák had intended, but it was exactly what he felt. It's fine to play the concerto in different ways, but it mustn't be a cheap copy of something you've heard – it has to have meaning and authenticity behind it. ●

INTERVIEW BY CHRISTIAN LLOYD



Was Dvořák thinking of his homeland as he wrote his Cello Concerto?

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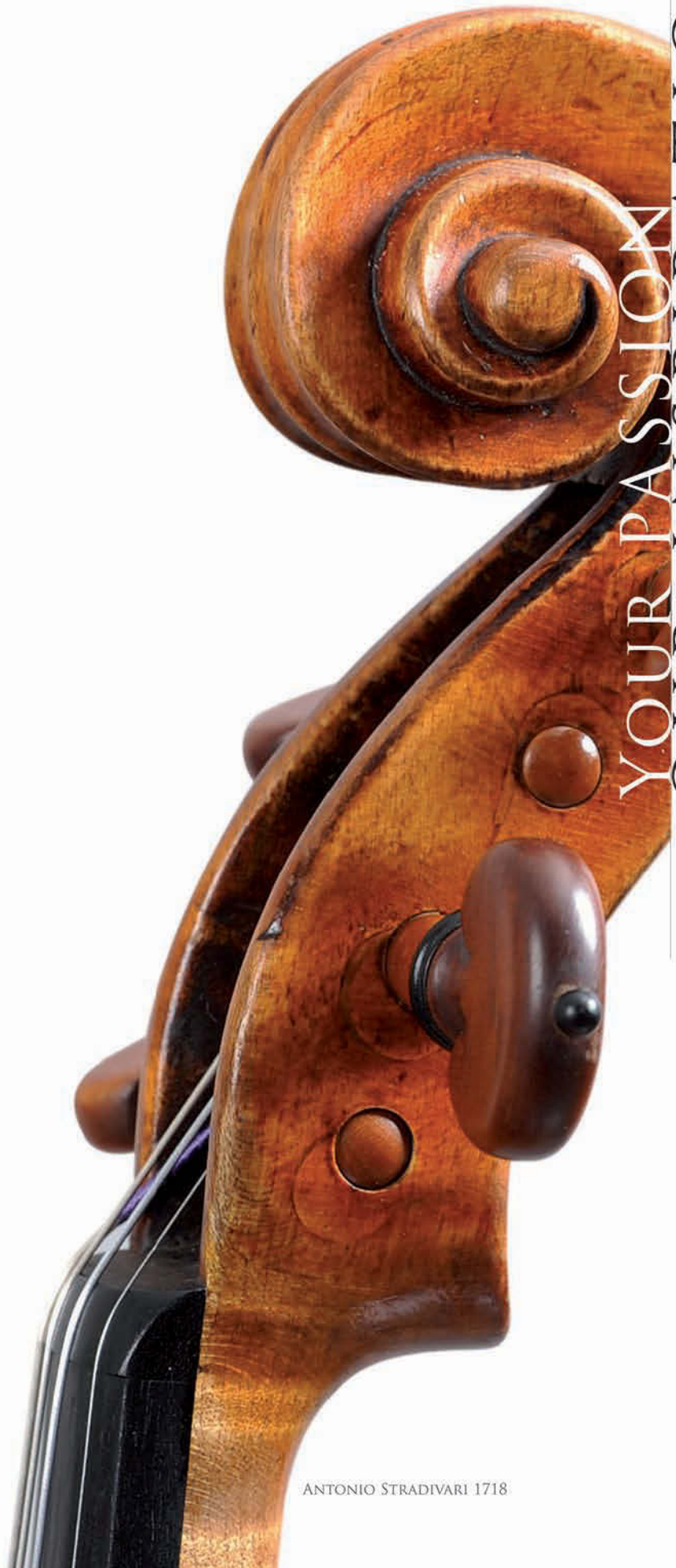
Cello by
Albert Caressa
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